

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

School of Performing Arts

Middle School 217

**977 FOX STREET
BRONX
NY 10459**

Principal: SETH LITT

Dates of review: March 14 - 15, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Myrna Rodriguez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

School of Performing Arts is a middle school with 340 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 26% Black, 68% Hispanic, 3% Asian students, and 2% other students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 23% 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 88.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school designs its curricula to be engaging and rigorous incorporating State standards and City expectations, targeting the various learners in the school. (1.1)
 - o The leadership and faculty integrate the Common Core Learning Standards' (CCLS) tasks with the curricula aligned to State standards. The school has adapted English language arts (ELA) and math tasks from the CCLS to ensure that students produce rigorous work products throughout the grades. Teachers develop literacy tasks that include science and social studies content which emphasize real world applications such as writing persuasive essays to alleviate environmental pollution in the community and worldwide. Emphasis on the needs of English language learners and special needs students is evident throughout the curricula. Classroom lessons through questioning demand that students use academic vocabulary when responding, which results in elevated levels of student work as evidenced in classes and posted student projects.
- The school's set of beliefs about how students learn best informs teacher pedagogy which results in student engagement and meaningful student work products. (1.2)
 - The school's emphasis on understanding each student's unique needs is evident across classrooms' teaching strategies and questioning. This allows students to engage in lessons through various entry points. To engage students in critical thinking in an ELA class, the teacher incorporated a social studies theme and provided cross-discipline activities using suitable reading texts so that students were able to write a persuasive essay. Teachers provide necessary prompts during questioning to ensure students are using the academic vocabulary relevant to the lesson. As a result, relevant sub-groups of students are able to participate in the lesson.
- The leadership's makes targeted organizational decisions that maximize the use of the budget, staff and assignments that support instructional goals. (1.3)
 - o The allocation of the budget supports targeted professional development for all teachers, coaches, teacher teams, including one group focused on the use of technology to enhance instruction. Resources allow the school to focus on reading across all subjects. Balanced literacy motivates students to improve their reading as this program sets benchmarks that students want to attain. Teachers who received targeted help in assessing and teaching new reading strategies has led to increases in student reading levels by one to two years to date, thus addressing the school's main instructional goal that all students are reading at their grade level by the end of the year.
 - o Teacher teams that meet weekly use an inquiry approach to monitor a targeted group of students for whom they develop specific assessments and teaching strategies in order to improve the work of struggling students. They share the student work within the team, review which strategies are most effective for a variety of student learners, and revise their work on an ongoing basis. As a result periodic assessment data shows steady academic growth in ELA and math.

- Teacher teams use various assessments and tasks aligned to the curricula to analyze student progress in order to make instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - o Monthly assessments in all content areas check for student understanding. In science, students showed a continuing need for support around writing a good scientific observation. Science teachers take student work to their team meetings so that their colleagues across the content areas, especially in ELA, support students learning writing techniques to be applied in science. .
 - o Teachers use strategies such as entry and exit questions to gauge their understanding of their students' learning needs. Students use individual writing boards during a lesson to record and display answers, helping teachers to see on-the-moment student responses to monitor students' learning throughout the lessons.
- The school's levels of teacher observations analyzes teacher effectiveness and student progress in order to develop next steps for professional growth that is differentiated and used by teachers for self-reflection. (4.1)
 - o The leadership engages in short regularly scheduled cycles of teacher observations using components of the Danielson Framework and then provide timely feedback and suggestions for improvement, and develop relevant professional development opportunities that are matched to teachers' needs. Additionally, the school aligns all formal and informal observations to a mutually agreed upon set of individual teacher goals and overarching school foci. As a result, teachers shared that they are held accountable for teaching practices that impact student learning.
- The school community has an inclusive culture that sustains an orderly and safe environment ensuring that students and adults are achieving personally and academically. (1.4)
 - o Teachers support youth development through the implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) program. Students' participation in the program enables them to receive rewards for positive behavioral and academic outcomes. Improved student behaviors are evidenced in mutual respect between students and adults, decrease in student suspensions, and increases in student attendance and academic performance.
 - o All students are known by several adults and at least one adult works with students to coordinate attendance and youth development supports, including after school activities. Partnerships with outside organizations allow students to engage in after-school sports and academics and receive social/emotional support. .As a result, students expressed they are aware of school expectations, they are able to access targeted academic support, and/or guidance whenever needed.

What the school needs to improve

- Evaluate structures and systems to ensure that assessment data is organized and analyzed to make needed adjustments so that there is cohesiveness with school practices and policies (5.2)
 - o School leaders are developing structures to assess, evaluate, and adjust school practices. Furthermore, the school and individual teachers periodically inform

- students and families about progress relative to academics, attendance, and behavior. However, the school has not yet developed a coherent way in which to use all the available data to suitably guide and share the work of individuals and groups of teachers, thus missing out using academic and attendance and behavioral data to improve student outcomes even further.
- Evaluate periodically the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration and capacity building strategies to develop teacher leadership. (5.4)
 - School leaders monitor the effectiveness of the teacher team protocol and other professional collaborations, but do not yet sufficiently review the work of teams around their efforts to align curriculum, teacher pedagogy, and attendance practices. As a result, some teachers' instructional practices are not aligned to the school's beliefs and some teams do not place needed emphasis on attendance, therefore minimizing impacting achievement for all students
 - The school reviews data from the Progress Report, Learning Environment Survey, and periodic assessments, to evaluate the impact of hiring and training practices of new teachers and paraprofessionals. However, it is just beginning to use student assessment data and classroom observations to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's policies and practices. As a result providing all staff with needed guidance is not yet fully developed.
 - Further engage families in school decision-making processes so that they can impact academic, social and behavioral needs of their children. (2.4)
 - Families and students are engaged in reciprocal discussions about student academic, behavioral and attendance progress. However, information regarding performance on CCLS tasks and next learning steps on how to achieve rigorous and high levels of student work has yet to be fully shared with families. This limits student and family engagement in learning about the focus on CCLS. Additionally, families and students are not sufficiently engaged in meaningful school decision-making processes around academic and social areas, thus missing out on full engagement of all constituents.
 - Further develop the partnership between home and school to communicate high expectations and support students to improve their learning outcomes. (3.4)
 - The school and staff communicate high expectations to students and families regarding academic and behavioral performance through newsletters, calendars, and events hosted by the parent coordinator, and via various internet platforms. However, the school has not yet identified sufficient additional venues to effectively partner with all families to ensure they are knowledgeable in preparing their children for postsecondary readiness and the future.
 - The leadership and staff consistently communicate high expectations for all students as evidenced during student interviews. The school displays inspirational academic, and behavioral messages in the hallways and classrooms that emphasize these expectations. However, while attendance has improved almost 4%, it is still low. Consequently, additional ways in which to engage this high-need subgroup is still being explored, thus missing out on raising all students' academic performance relative to their peers.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: School of Performing Arts	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
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