

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Fannie Lou Hamer
Middle School 286

1001 JENNINGS STREET
BRONX
NY 10460

Principal: LORRAINE CHANON

Dates of review: March 21 - 22, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Myrna Rodriguez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Fannie Lou Hamer middle school with 240 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 28% Black, 70% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has curricula aligned to key State standards that are rigorous and engaging for all students. (1.1)
 - The school's integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in the curriculum maps is evident across all core subjects. Lessons include explorations of careers and skills needed for high school and college readiness through the purposeful emphasis on key standards in reading and writing using non-fiction texts. In science while discussing inherited traits, students were exposed to careers in forensic science and criminology. In most classes students are engaged by the high expectations of teachers that students use academic vocabulary, concepts, and content in responding to oral or written tasks. As a result, students are aware of academic expectations, are engaged in producing meaningful work products, which demonstrate their academic progress.
 - Teacher questions and tasks elicit high order thinking from students. In some classes teachers pose differentiated questions for groups of students so that English language learners and students with special needs are cognitively engaged in the lessons. In an English class students chose questions using different levels of Bloom's taxonomy including comparison, analysis, and synthesis to discuss why people migrate to other countries. As a result, students demonstrate high thinking skills through their discussions leading to improving their academic performance.
- The majority of teachers adhere to a set of beliefs of how students learn best, and teacher pedagogy is based on ensuring that lessons and tasks are engaging, and embedded in rigorous, differentiated curricula. (1.2)
 - Teachers use the workshop model in the belief that their role is to facilitate learning and that students should be engaged in inquiry based activities and tasks. Teacher teams develop strategies and develop lessons to ensure that students learn using various platforms including engaging in group work, conferencing, and independent work using technology. In a science class, students chose how they would work on an ecosystem project, whether in a group or individually, but everyone had to submit their own set of academic vocabulary to be added to the classroom word wall and they all had to share their process, thinking, and results of the experiments or projects with the whole class. As a result English language learners (ELL's) and students with disabilities and other groups and individuals have multiple entry points and opportunities to achieve learning targets of the lesson set for all students.
- The leadership makes strategic organizational decisions that support school goals and respond to student needs, academic, and behavioral outcomes. (1.3)
 - The school invests in instructional technology to enhance learning in all core subjects. This results in more student engagement in their own learning as they are often seen in classes using the SMART boards to work out math problems, research websites, and discussing the videos on non-fiction themes in social studies, science, and English Language Arts (ELA). Additionally, the sixth and seventh grades are organized with a set of teachers who share the responsibility of academic and youth development for a small cluster of students. The eighth

grade simulates a high school experience for students, giving them more independence in movement throughout the building and offering high school Regents' courses in science. As a result students are engaged in interactive inquiry based lessons using technology and are nurtured and prepared for high school by the structure of their schedules, teacher, and student groupings and exposure to rigorous curriculum that improves student outcomes as evidenced in periodic and class assessment data.

- Teams of teachers align assessments to ensure that key standards in reading and writing are embedded and use various student performance data to adjust pedagogical decisions and to understand school and student progress over time. (2.2.)
 - Using performance data, the leadership and teams of teachers and individual teachers determine effectiveness of teaching strategies, tasks, and instructional decisions. One school team's feedback included that based on the various assessments they noticed that students in grade 6 had fluency and decoding needs, of which the school had previously been unaware, and had not used suitable strategies to reach these students. Upon further analysis throughout the year they developed rubrics that include academic vocabulary for ELL's, helping to guide students and suitably meet the needs of this subgroup. Furthermore, the school used the performance data to implement various programs with specific teaching strategies to support low functioning ELL's, software for fluency and decoding, and a reading on-line program for low achievers. As a result, students have shown incremental improvement in class assessments in reading and math, in periodic assessments and reading levels.
 - Across classrooms teachers use varied forms of assessment during lessons to ensure that students understand and are on task. In an ELA class the teacher assesses student learning by intermittently calling on several students to explain academic vocabulary to the class, having students use their fingers to indicate the correct answer to a question so that she could gauge at a quick glance student understanding. Additionally, having students turn and talk to a partner assures that all students are cognitively engaged in the lesson. Using these strategies, the teacher was able to gauge which students needed assistance and she adjusted the lesson accordingly. Because students are held accountable and are engaged in their own learning by the constant checking for understanding by teachers students have improved academic performance.
- School leaders and faculty periodically gather and analyze student data to understand what students need, and adjust school wide pedagogy, curricula and tasks to ensure student progress. (2.1)
 - The school gathers and analyzes the State's ELA, math and science tests, class grades, and supportive services data, to develop the school's goals and action plans based on the findings of students' strengths and needs. The overall conclusion was that developing cohorts of students reading at grade level was a primary need in order to achieve writing stamina and produce meaningful work products. School action plans and teacher teams prioritize reading and writing across the curricula by establishing using running records and assessments tools such as Fountas and Pinnell. As a result students are showing improved reading scores and improvement in core subjects.
- The school consistently engages the community in various ways to communicate high expectations for all students. (3.4)

- One of the main goals and expectations of the school is for every student to achieve at least two years improvement in reading levels. Teachers in all disciplines work in teams to assure that all students reach this goal, through conferences, assessments, and group work. As a result, students are enthusiastic to speak in classes, and during student group meetings they shared that they are achieving high levels in reading due to the focus that the school has placed on this expectation.
- School leaders and faculty use of on-line cell phones consistently communicates high expectations to students and families. Additionally, all school activities focus on informing families and students of the school's and student goals, along with attendance, academic, and social behavior expectations. Every year all new students and parents attend a special session at the school to receive computers so that families can log on to ARIS. Through suitable training families are able to use the web to obtain their children's class grades, goals, and next learning steps. As a result, most families learn how they can help their children to the next level.

What the school needs to improve

- Align classroom observations and individual teacher goals to ensure alignment of school's instructional goals and vision of how students learn best. (4.1)
 - School leaders who have observed all teachers various times throughout the year provide written and oral feedback in a timely manner to teachers. However, there is not sufficient alignment of individual teacher goals to what is observed around his/her classroom practice. Additionally, some written feedback does not refer to previous observation recommendations thus missing out on providing continuity in what teachers need to improve and to attain personal goals.
 - Teachers, receive via each observation reports, many recommendations on how to improve their practices, and the school offers professional development to help. However, a lack of concentrating on a few recommendations and focused professional development so that the school and teachers can track improvement in methodology over time and be able to see if students improve academically, hinders teachers from focusing on key practices to improve.
- Further develop policies to enable teachers to accurately measure student performance, in order to adjust instructional strategies and curricular decisions to ensure alignment with City promotional criteria and State assessments (2.3)
 - Teachers use technology to record and analyze student data, including student grades referenced to a grading policy, which is accessible by the leadership who monitor student progress. However, trends about subgroups, including high achievers, low attendance students, and students who live in shelters, are not available. The lack of suitable disaggregating and sufficiently analyzing data limits collection of information that would allow the school to enhance curricular and instructional decisions in order to improve all student achievement.
- Ensure that the school community uses collaborative and data informed processes to set appropriate goals for all student subgroups, including high achievers. (3.2)
 - Teacher teams and individual teachers develop differentiated goals, based on data for individuals and some subgroups, including Ells and students with disabilities. However, annual and interim learning goals are not set consistently across the grades for other subgroups, such as high achievers, low attendance students, and

students who reside in shelters, thus resulting in an achievement gap for these students.

- Further opportunities for leadership development and evaluate effectiveness of school collaborative structures to ensure their effectiveness to support the work as needed. (5.4)
 - The leadership and faculty meet regularly with teacher leaders from all collaborative teams to assess effectiveness of teacher teams. Team leaders shared that they collaborate with the leadership to make improvements in how the team organizes their time, what student work will be concentrated on in future meetings, and what strategies will be developed, adapted or adopted to ensure student improvement based on student work data that they share. However, there is not sufficient emphasis to support the work in improving attendance practices. Though there is some effort to improve attendance, teams do not drive efforts effectively, which results in this subgroup of students having low levels of academic improvement.
 - School leaders and faculty meet regularly to consider leadership opportunities for teachers within the school structure. As a result, teachers have various leadership roles in teacher teams and staff development. However, there are limited venues for distributed leadership outside of the teacher teams and coaching which limits capacity building in school decision-making processes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Fannie Lou Hamer	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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