

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

M.S. 390

10X390

**1930 Andrews Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Robert Mercedes

Dates of review: May 21 - 22, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Jodi Radwell

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S.390 is a middle school with 433 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 16.86% Black, 83.14% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 33.72% English language learners and 18.02% special education students. Boys account for 49.65% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50.35%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93.10%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a calm, respectful, safe and inclusive environment that is conducive for learning to take place. (1.4)
 - The principal's cabinet, including instructional leaders, a guidance counselor and social worker, review a range of data including attendance data and Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) reports to guide improvements in their work together, maintaining a strong emphasis on socio-emotional learning and development, which is thoroughly integrated in the school's work, that provide students with opportunities to explore societal issues such as cyber-bullying, impacting their learning both socially and academically as evidenced by increased attendance rates.
 - Students expressed their feelings of safety and trust in the school as they relayed how teachers are always available to them and described many ways that the school supports their learning, including a rich afterschool program with both academic and sports offerings such as a writing clinic and a chess club, as well as a peer mediation program, all of which result in higher levels of engagement for students who feel part of the school community and are enthusiastic about their learning.
- The school engages families and students in an open exchange regarding school expectations and has practical communication systems that keep parents informed, effectively supporting the learning needs of both children and adults. (2.4)
 - A large turnout of parents confirmed that the school does an effective job in communicating with them about school wide issues and their children's academic and personal progress through monthly calendar, email log, newsletter, school website and EnGrade, an online grading system, where teachers post information about student progress, including next learning steps. The reciprocal nature of communication with the school has allowed parents to assist their children in addressing their learning goals and improving their work on Common Core aligned tasks such as "Students respond to Greek mythology" and "Thank you, Mr. Falkner" letters, both of which evidence higher order thinking on the part of students.
 - Parents expressed their enthusiasm for the school's regular offerings of workshops that address their learning as well as the learning of their children, including instruction on accessing Achievement Reporting Information System (ARIS), cooking classes, and English as a Second Language classes and expressed their appreciation that the school has allowed for their input on offerings, including Citizenship Classes and Chess in the Schools, increasing parental ownership of the programs made available to all members of the school community.
- The Principal has established a learning community focused on data-based goals and action planning that drive efforts to accelerate both student learning and socio-emotional growth. (3.2)
 - All teachers maintain data binders, and utilize flexible student groupings, the use of which helps them to plan instruction, targeting the learning needs

of both individuals and subgroups of students. A wide array of student work in work folders and prominently displayed on bulletin boards shows evidence of feedback to students and progress made on identified learning goals, through multiple written drafts which demonstrate student growth in critical thinking and expression of ideas.

- Teacher teams have begun utilizing a “Target 10” program to select a subgroup of students with common learning needs, plan academic interventions to address these needs, and cycle back to re-evaluate progress, a process which directly impacts student performance in writing, a skill strand prioritized by the school, as evidenced by student work products that demonstrate increased mastery on writing rubrics.
- The school’s external partnerships and internal support services foster continual learning opportunities for students and their families, promoting both academic and personal growth and development. (4.4)
 - The school’s Guidance Counselor and Social Worker secure interns each year as a result of their ongoing relationships with Columbia University, Hunter College, Mercy College among other institutions, enabling them to provide widespread guidance and advisement supports to students which continually emphasize high school articulation and college readiness and reinforce the school’s dedication to social/emotional learning.
 - As a result of the school’s ongoing partnership with Morris Health Care Clinic, they are able to staff and operate an on-site Health Clinic five days per week, which offers immunization, dental and vision services and the ability to administer medication, facilitating the health and well being of students and families. In addition, the school’s provision of internship opportunities such as Feed the Hungry and New York Harvest allow students to experience real world learning opportunities, the impact of their service and their contribution to the community at large.
- The school has structures in place which support the evaluation of their data collection processes where relevant information around student progress and performance help to inform curriculum and instructional decisions. (5.2)
 - The instructional cabinet, which represents of a wide array of constituents in the school community meets regularly and has also been able to collaborate with the Institute for Learning as a result of Network support, to better evaluate assessment practices and has resulted in the school’s transition from individualized teacher and classroom assessments to more uniform grade-wide assessments which are now aligned with the expectations of the Common Core Standards.
 - Meetings with all constituents confirmed ongoing conferences with students and families as well as a reflective process around practices for collecting and sharing student performance data. The use of portfolios, comparison charts using baseline, middle and end of year data resulted in critical reflection by school leaders and teachers, leading to the identification of an inconsistency around conveyance of student achievement trends and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. This was then addressed by the adoption of an online grading system.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish curricula that cognitively engage a variety of learners through consistent opportunities for authentic, rigorous learning experiences, resulting in deeper thinking and meaningful work products. (1.1)
 - The school has made progress with its curriculum mapping process, through grade team meetings where teachers' work includes the alignment of reading and writing instruction to Common Core State Standards. The school has made impressive use of Common Core aligned tasks, as evidenced by unique projects such as a Hall of Fame scavenger hunt and writing assignments tasks where women of the Progressive Movement are compared with contemporary women, yielding impressive student work products. However, the bilingual classes do not reflect evidence of rigorous learning experiences which addresses the needs of all learners, thus inhibiting English Language learners from experiencing the rigor embedded in these rich tasks.
 - Although teachers in teams engage in planning through the use of rubrics and existing units from Teaching Matters, there is an inconsistent expectation for student work. For example planning documents for the general education classrooms evidence planning to engage students with rigorous Common Core learning tasks, yet bilingual and special education classrooms did not evidence these same curricula artifacts, resulting in uneven opportunities for student mastery of key standards.
- Increase teacher capacity in designing varied learning experiences to meet differentiated needs and promote cognitive engagement for all students. (1.2)
 - Most classrooms reflect components of the workshop model as the school's common teaching framework, and the differentiated approach to lesson planning is evidenced by pre-planned student groupings in each visited classroom. However, teaching strategies, questioning and assignments that meet varied student needs are inconsistent across classrooms. In some classrooms, students worked on "just right" tasks using a common high level text with varied content, practicing skills they need to improve. Teacher modeling and questioning in these classroom, promoted student discussion that called for critical thinking supported by evidence from texts. However, in other classrooms despite the evidence of data-based student grouping, the tasks did not match student needs, questioning did not promote high levels of thinking, and students were not held accountable to support their claims by evidence. As a result, students are engaged in thinking that is uneven, some producing work that reflects the rigorous pedagogy, others carried out tasks that require low levels of thinking and cognitive engagement.
- Refine organizational systems to more equitably distribute instructional support to classrooms to improve learning outcomes for all students. (1.3)
 - Although the school communicated a strong belief in the value of heterogeneous grouping of students to maximize learning outcomes, the school's structural organization which separates Special Education students and English Language learners from the General Education population, does not reflect this belief, thereby diminishing the benefit that heterogeneous student groupings could offer to raise achievement levels for all students.

- Although the school provides opportunities such as “Lunch and Learn” on Thursdays during extended time for students and professional development both after school and on as well as off-site staff retreats for teachers, the sporadic nature of these sessions does not address the needs of all students and teachers, as evidenced by uneven performance by students in subgroups and uneven pedagogical practices across classrooms.
- Extend the data gathering and analytic processes of teacher teams to identify the strengths and learning needs of student subgroups to make curricular adjustments. (2.2)
 - Teachers’ use of rubrics to communicate clear expectations to students is evident in some classrooms, and student work evidences teacher feedback with next steps; however, these rubrics are not fully aligned with the standards targeted during instructional time, resulting in skewed determination of effective and ineffective instructional practices.
 - While the assistant principals promote the use of ongoing assessment data including specific item analysis for students, there was little evidence of formative assessment practices in the classrooms, resulting in minimized opportunities for teachers were unable to articulate ways in which they checked for student understanding in order to make effective adjustments to instruction, diminishing student outcomes.
- Utilize a common lens to conduct both formal and informal observations along with coherent student data to enable a strategic approach for differentiated professional growth. (4.1)
 - Through frequent informal and formal observations of teachers along with analysis of student work, the instructional team provides feedback to teachers using Teachscape, “Quick Visit” templates and other formatted observation reports. However, this feedback is not yet fully connected to Danielson, the school’s chosen framework. Furthermore, the professional development that is delivered in response to this data through the UFT Teacher Center and FHI 360, evidences no strategic use of observation data to streamline offerings and target individual teachers or teams of teachers, minimizing instructional capacity building efforts that would most effectively impact student learning.
 - Observations of teacher teams revealed that teachers have limited leadership opportunities, and interviews with teachers on inquiry teams revealed inconsistent understanding of expectations for teacher team work, resulting in limited potential to positively impact student achievement though the use of data and the analysis of student work.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: M.S. 390	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