

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

The Family School  
Early Childhood school X443

1116 SHERIDAN AVENUE  
BRONX  
NY 10456

Principal: PAMELA LEE

Dates of review: November 29-30, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Family School is an Early Childhood school with 398 students from kindergarten through grade 4. The school population comprises 32% Black, 60% Hispanic, 6% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 52.7% English language learners and 15.3% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school leader makes effective organizational decisions that align well with the school goals to improve student work. (1.3)
  - o The school has invested an abundance of resources to support the school's goal to align their writing with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). As a result, discussions during classroom visits reveal that students are writing persuasive pieces of writing across the grades that strengthen students' understanding of text structure in general, and non-fiction texts in particular. A review of student writing folders showed evidence of students collecting information and using graphic organizers to develop their ideas on informational reports and many teachers are working with a consultant to develop their practices in this genre. As a result, they have developed useful tools to utilize when conferring with students to improve the quality of their writing as evidenced in some samples of student writing shared during the teacher meetings.
  - o The principal has strategically developed weekly opportunities for teachers to meet with colleagues to plan, set goals and look at student work. Some of these meetings are vertical while others are within the grade. As a result, academic intervention teachers and teachers of English language learners are better able to plan instruction for the students they service during these meetings. They also support the school goals and plan with classroom teachers to align their support for intervention and enhance teacher collaboration. As a result, teacher teams are able to share the responsibility and accountability of meeting the varied needs of students.
- School leaders and faculty are deeply committed to the social, emotional and academic development of all students. (1.4)
  - o The tone and culture in the building is respectful between students, teachers and parents. This was evident in classrooms that use the Six Agreements, which was developed collaboratively with staff, along with a conflict resolution program. Students, teachers and parents communicate regularly and feel that they have a voice in the decision making process of the school, based on the feedback from the School Survey and responses from school leadership. Parent leaders are actively involved in supporting the school's goals. For example, parents and students participated in a Unity Walk as part of the school's Anti Violence Program. In addition, the principal and the parents association host a monthly "Family Breakfast" to provide updated information about the school's progress and initiatives. Students are generally eager to learn and feel supported by the staff. As one student shared, "I can also walk into the principal's office to talk to her if kids are bothering us." There is an inclusive culture that permeates the building and encourages a commitment to teaching and learning throughout the school, as evidenced by teachers in the school always being willing to meet with their peers and administration during scheduled meetings as well as during non-mandated times, to share and improve their work.
- School leaders and faculty communicate high expectations to students and families, resulting in a shared commitment to the school's goals. (3.4)
  - o The principal and teachers regularly communicate and collaborate with families to reinforce the importance of the school's goals to support students. The

school's leadership team has a very clear process for sharing key information about the school's expectations through school agendas and parent meetings. Consequently, parents and students work collaboratively with the school to address academic and social emotional needs that support student learning. They have established effective partnerships with Morris Heights services and Bronx Works to support the social emotional development of students and provide families with tools to help their children with homework and strategies for conflict resolution. Through twice-monthly Parent Support meetings and other mandated meetings the principal has created various, regular opportunities to meet with parents to listen to concerns. The monthly assemblies for attendance, academics and celebrations also foster parent participation and encourage student success. The School Survey indicates high parent participation and commitment to the school's stated goals and, as a result, parents feel that they are true partners in their child's education and have recruited and trained eight active Learning Leaders that volunteer daily.

- School leaders support teachers with frequent cycles of classroom observations whose aim is to improve teacher practice, leading to improved student work products. (4.1)
  - o The principal and assistant principal provide daily feedback to teachers using a research-based framework. This practice enables the leadership to determine areas of instructional needs including student engagement and planning. As a result, teachers have the opportunity to refine their practice and adjust instruction, based on this timely feedback. "Our principal's feedback is useful" was stated by several teachers during the meetings.
  - o The leadership provides teachers with support from consultants around curriculum planning and non-fiction reading and writing. New teachers are paired with experienced staff and also receive additional support from administration and mentors. Many teachers expressed how helpful the principal's feedback has been in refining their teaching strategies to meet the needs of their students and creating a very supportive and nurturing environment where teachers are able to share their concerns with administration and have access to support from their colleagues. As a result, teachers revise their curriculum units using a backward design for planning with essential questions. Students research topics of interest, such as animals and develop research and language skills that improve their understanding of non-fiction writing. Consequently, lessons and assignments are more engaging and student work is has improved, based on the writing-on-demand pieces that are reviewed and assessed by grade teams. A review of this data indicates that students are making progress in their writing and are therefore more engaged in their learning, as evident during classroom visits.
- Teacher collaboration is a priority and faculty benefit from varied opportunities to share practices with an eye towards using an inquiry approach to foster improvement in student learning. (4.2)
  - o Teachers meet regularly and self-select inquiry topics based on the data and goals of the school. For example, after a review of formative and state assessments one of the inquiry groups chose to work on the use of math language in word problems. During the summer, teachers began to look at the CCLS in mathematics to develop math tasks across the grades. As a result, teachers have developed common assessment tasks that focus on mathematical language, leading to instructional decisions in the classroom and adjustments in the curriculum that include key questions to promote critical thinking. Even though the school is in the beginning stages of this work, teachers are very

excited to see the progress that students are making. This progress is evident on data from the end of unit assessments and student work that is reviewed during teacher meetings. Some of their inquiry work is also available on ARIS.

- o Teacher teams review the writing-on-demand pieces that are collected in September, November, March and June using a common rubric. After a review of the data from their writing continuum assessment, teachers saw the need to focus on non-fiction writing, which is aligned to the school goals. Many of these pieces focus on non-fiction and also include aspects of the CCLS, such as informational texts and persuasive writing. As a result, progress is evident in student writing, based on the results shared during the teacher meetings and some of the work reviewed during the classroom visits where students were writing research reports.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure that curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and skills across grade levels. (1.1)
  - o Even though the school aligns curricula to state standards and is beginning to learn about the CCLS, the academic tasks currently lack academic rigor. For example, during classroom visits teachers use math tasks that were developed collaboratively, but these tasks lack content and process strands that could enable all students to access rich curriculum. During classroom visits, many students were compliant but were not cognitively engaged in rigorous tasks and were only asked to complete tasks that did not invite them to think critically. Teachers incorporate questioning techniques during their lessons, but the questions did not promote the depth and rigor needed to facilitate student learning for the various sub-groups. As a result, classroom instruction does not lead to critical thinking, leading to low academic levels of proficiency also evident on the school's recent progress report and current student work.
- Develop opportunities for differentiation of instruction to promote critical thinking for all students. (1.2)
  - o The school uses a workshop model that provides students with opportunities to work in groups. However, during classroom visits, most student groups worked on the same task with minimal evidence of scaffolding, differentiation or support. Teachers use some formative assessments to plan but they do not yet unpack those assessments to identify specific strategies and skills that students need to improve. In addition, teachers are not consistently using summative data from state assessments, which limits their opportunity to plan effective instruction. For example, many of the students work with their peers to complete the assigned task but are not able to read the lesson's text. As a result, across classrooms there are many missed opportunities for learning. Consequently, students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are not able to actively participate in the learning process as evidenced during classroom visits.
- Provide comprehensive professional development opportunities to improve student outcomes in the school. (4.3)
  - o Teachers are afforded some time to work with consultants to plan curriculum tasks that incorporate the CCLS in writing and mathematics and Universal Design for Learning training. However, since it is early in the school year, there has not been enough time allocated to deepen their understanding of the tasks or bundles to effectively implement them across grades. Currently there is not

- sufficient on-site, differentiated support for teachers to implement the goals of the school. For example, some teachers across grades are piloting a Unison program in literacy while the rest of the teachers are using the school's standard based curriculum. As a result, teachers are not clear how to effectively align these practices to the school's curriculum in a cohesive manner. Also, during classroom visits, teaching practices do not consistently challenge students to think critically and apply their learning in meaningful ways. Consequently, teacher practice does not effectively lead to improved student outcomes.
- Develop strategic systems to effectively monitor progress towards school goals. (5.3)
    - o Even though there is some alignment between the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan and other goal setting processes, they do not yet take into consideration the varied and diverse needs of teachers. For example, they are currently working on integrating the CCLS into their curriculum, but have not yet had sufficient training with all staff members to allow for a clear focus, nor has there been any exposure to the bundles available to support teachers in this process. A small group of teachers worked on this project during the summer but, due to other priorities in the school, were unable to share it with the rest of the school effectively. As a result, implementation of some of the tasks lack rigor, as evident during classroom visits, and the school is currently unable to gauge progress of these tasks effectively so that timely adjustments can be made.
    - o Because the school's focus is currently on the formative assessments of Fountas and Pinnell, they are unable to develop a comprehensive view of school-wide reading needs. For example, the school tracks reading progress using the data from the above assessments. However, these are collected periodically throughout the year and there are not sufficient opportunities to use other assessments to inform instruction and make adjustments based on more current needs of students. As a result, there are unidentified gaps in the curriculum and missed opportunities for student learning. Consequently teachers are unable to monitor progress in the classroom, grade and school level effectively.
  - Use multiple data sources to effectively align assessments to the curriculum to close the achievement gap. (2.2)
    - o Although teacher teams create some assessments and rubrics in writing, they are not all consistently aligned to state standards since there have been limited opportunities to do this work deeply with all teachers. In addition, this process is in the very early stages for other content areas as well. For example, teacher teams have developed some tools to assess student writing and some rubrics developed with the consultant are useful in classroom instruction but there is not yet a clear understanding of how to use that information to effectively meet students' individual needs. Therefore, there is a limited view of how students are making progress in each class, grade and across the school, leading to a diminished ability of the school to adjust and redesign instruction school-wide.
    - o Teachers and teacher teams review data but currently do not have a deep understanding of how to disaggregate the data effectively to determine next steps for students. During teacher meetings, teachers discuss general patterns and trends of their classrooms but currently do not identify specific skills and strategies for the various subgroups. Administration currently gathers formative assessments but has not yet made good use of summative data and analyzed it to determine specific needs of students with disabilities and English language learners. Consequently, they are unable to make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

|   |           |          |          |           |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>School name: THE FAMILY SCHOOL</b>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| <b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>                             |           |          |          |           |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>  | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| 1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 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? |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 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?   |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?   |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| <b>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.</b>                 |           |          |          |           |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| 2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 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?  |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 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?   |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?  |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| <b>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.</b>                             |           |          |          |           |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
| 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?  |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 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?  |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?  |           | <b>X</b> |          |           |
| 3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?   |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |

**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**

|           |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>UD</b> | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>Developing</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>Proficient</b> | <b>WD</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|