

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship

Middle School X448

**3710 Bares Ave
Bronx, NY
10467**

Principal: William Frackelton

Dates of review: February 15-16, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Kyle S. Haver

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship is a junior high-intermediate-middle school with 216 students from grade 6 through grade 7. The school population comprises 36% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 24% 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 91.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and his leadership team align the budget, resources, space and schedules to meet learning needs as they support the school's instructional goals in order to help drive positive student progress. (1.3)
 - Since starting this school three years ago, the interim principal and his leadership team has sought additional grant money and innovative programs, such as iZone and Special Arts Projects, that have enabled the administration to allocate funds, schedules and programs and additional staff members to ensure a close alignment to the school's instructional goals. In doing so, the principal has expanded the arts and technology programs that create multiple opportunities for students to be engaged in rigorous interdisciplinary units as well as teachers to come together and design CCLS aligned instructional units. As a result, from the interdisciplinary units students used video media, to complement their writing products, which exhibited higher order thinking and problem solving skills.
 - The principal and his administrative team have purposely programmed the school so there is time for weekly teacher team meetings and common planning time within the school day. In addition, the administration has strategically included arts and technology staff on these teams for joint planning. This collaboration has resulted in the design of mixed media projects where students' work demonstrates deeper understanding of their humanities and science courses.
- Upon reviewing a variety of data sources, the principal and staff have made important and strategic changes to create a positive, safe environment for all students and teachers so there is an increased focus on student achievement and professional learning. (1.4)
 - Since reviewing the 2010-11 school-wide data, the principal made considerable changes to improve safety and build a culture that ensures a focus on student learning and professional collaborations. Changes like holding student advisories every morning, requiring school uniforms, scheduling hallway monitors, providing enriching after school programs and the principal regularly walking the hallways helped change the school's culture to be more nurturing and safe. Both students and parents reported there was a big improvement from the prior year. One parent said, "I noticed several changes including dismissal where the school staff makes sure students don't hang-out and often go into the playground across the street to make sure all the kids are safe." Another parent reported, "The principal is always available, I can text him, call him and/or send him an email...and I can always contact my child's advisor if I have any questions and/or concerns about homework or his report card." Students also talked about how helpful these changes are. One eighth grader stated, "The increase in arts classes and the afterschool programs helps me stay focused on my school work...and the teachers are also helping me build my portfolio for high school!" As a result, the school has already shown improvement by decreasing chronic lateness and absences and increasing daily attendance by over 20%.
 - By creating grade-level advisories and coordinating the guidance staff and Masters of Social Work clinical interns to work with groups and individual students, the school has created programs that focus on anti-bullying and student collaboration. The students explained that they can always go to their advisor for help with "school work and other stuff," and "the principal is always there to talk with us." As a result, most students reported that the administration and faculty are really caring and approachable and the students feel as though their ideas and concerns really mattered to the staff. Also, students stated they persevered more often in their homework assignments and

looked online to completed missed assignments as well as track their own academic performance.

- The leadership team has developed research-based rubrics and a tracking system of frequent classroom observations with feedback designed to support the professional growth of the faculty as they work towards the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). (4.1)
 - The principal and his leadership team selected and customized the Danielson Rubric as a common lens for classroom walkthroughs, informal classroom visits and professional conversations two to three times per day. During these conversations, the principal also discusses student work and data in relation to each teacher's practice and student work. One teacher stated, "I welcome the frequent visits from the principal. He sees things that I do not see and helps me to be more effective with my lessons." As a result, teachers feel supported and are given direct and actionable feedback to support student learning.
 - School leaders have developed a web-based tool to keep track of all teachers' conversations, observations and walk-throughs. In doing so, the principal has uncovered professional development trends, such as the need for more effective and higher order questioning strategies, that have helped make strategic and differentiated professional development decisions to support all of the staff in learning about Norman Webb's depth of knowledge and how to design more cognitively demanding questions. In addition, the leadership team uses this tool to make data-informed decisions about teacher teams, teacher mentorship as well as teacher tenure and individualized teacher development plans.
- School leaders and teachers effectively use common grading policies and tracking tools to analyze school level, grade and individual student data and performance trends that inform instruction and curriculum. (2.3)
 - Teachers and administrators use a common grading policy and a range of data sources to inform their instruction and curriculum development. By using ACUIITY to provide a skills-based item analysis, and using GoogleDocs to collect classroom grades, assignments and performance tasks, the administrators and coaches facilitate grade-wide dissemination of data so all teachers are equipped to track student growth towards mastery of skills. This information also serves as a guide for what needs re-teaching to the whole class, in small targeted groups, or to address needs of specific student sub-groups. The teachers' and administrators' deep analysis of these data sources leads to careful monitoring of student mastery, identification of student achievement trends, and the determination of next steps for whole class, relevant sub-groups, and individuals.
- School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to the school community and provide supports to ensure that students achieve their best. (3.4)
 - The sharp focus on increasing student achievement on the State assessments informs the administration's communication around high expectations to teachers, students, and parents. The principal and assistant principals record and analyze the meeting notes around student successes, gaps, and next steps on data sheets and then use this information to conference with and set performance expectations with teachers. Teachers and advisors then take time to meet one-on-one with their students to communicate these academic expectations as well as issues of attendance, behavior, and secondary school preparedness. In addition, teachers post student home work assignments on their websites and list grades online so that students as well as families understand what is expected and how students are achieving. As a result, students have a clear idea of their performance and what, if any, homework assignments they need to make up. In addition, families report they regularly check the home work and grade websites and have frequent conversations with their

children about class and homework, paying particular attention to their grades and ways they can support their academic achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Build upon the collaboration and inquiry process embedded within teacher teams to focus on deepening the curriculum across all subject areas to ensure rigorous tasks and higher order thinking skills engage and cognitively challenge all students. (1.1)
 - The school and teacher teams have done some work to identify key standards across grades and subject areas and have started to upgrade their curriculum maps and performance tasks. However, there is no common definition or criteria for quality CCLS-aligned curriculum maps or tasks, nor is there a vetting process to ensure that current tasks are rigorous before being implemented in the classroom. As a result, there are gaps in curricula within and across grades and subject areas where the classroom tasks observed neither challenged nor engaged all students with critical thinking skills. Without ensuring the curriculum maps are closely aligned to the CCLS and grow in complexity over time where gaps and redundancies are addressed, the students may not develop the appropriate critical thinking skills as they move through their middle school years.
 - This year the school is working to better align curriculum maps to the CCLS and the targeted goals of the school. In doing so, however, some teachers engage in the teaching of higher order content without scaffolding or differentiating their instruction, limiting students' ability to fully construct an understanding of key standards within the curriculum across grades and content areas. This lack of alignment between curriculum and instruction restricts the school's ability to close instructional gaps and accelerate student learning for a variety of learners, especially English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Further develop a shared understanding of rigorous instruction and performance tasks that align with the school's academic values so that all students are engaged in differentiated, challenging work. (1.2)
 - Some staff have been part of the school since its first year and others are either new to the school and/or new to teaching altogether. Despite this range of experience, the school's vision and mission have helped the staff to work together to meet students' needs. That said, there is a range of teaching styles and classroom pedagogy with limited examples of higher level questioning and student-to-student discussions, rigorous tasks and differentiated instruction. Many of the questions posed to students, and responses from students, remained at low levels and work products shared did not demonstrate critical thinking or cognitive challenge. As a result, there are many missed opportunities to develop students' critical thinking skills.
 - In some classrooms, teacher questions and tasks are scaffolded and differentiated, allowing students to articulate a clear understanding and produce meaningful work products. Although the school has made a commitment to improving questioning practices, they are not embedded within all classes and there is limited evidence of the impact on student work products or active student engagement in their learning, leading to uneven levels of student thinking across the school.
- Create additional structures and protocols to assess and revise curricula, assessments and classroom pedagogy to ensure instruction includes more cognitively challenging, interdisciplinary tasks that lead to increased understanding and performance for all students. (5.1)
 - The principal has made important strategic and resource decisions to ensure that all teachers meet together on grade level and subject level teams. During these times, teachers often discuss student work and discuss instructional suggestions and modifications. However,

there are few protocols used to analyze student work in relation to curriculum unit and task revisions during these meetings. As a result, important opportunities to edit, revise and/or upgrade instructional units based upon the analysis of student work and student data are missed.

- The teacher teams meet regularly throughout the year to discuss student work and instructional planning. However, many of these instructional changes and modifications are not yet captured on the teachers' instructional units, nor is there a calendar of conversations throughout the year to study cross-grade instructional maps to ensure a planned progression of content and cognitive complexity. In addition, teacher teams have not yet mapped out the progression of task and text complexity. This results in potential gaps and missed opportunities to design coherent courses of study in grade six through eight that align both to the CCLS and to the school's mission and goals.
- Build upon the vision and mission of the school, to deepen and expand teachers' leadership and understanding of collaborative inquiry in order to increase teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. (4.2)
 - Grade level teams meet weekly to study student work and student data, looking for evidence of student knowledge and integration of specific skills and strategies. However, the professional development using a collaborative inquiry approach is not well defined across all teams. As a result, team members do not consistently use a range of protocols to see evidence of student thinking, understand learning trends, nor do they sufficiently reflect on their instructional strategies in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their classroom level instructional decisions and practices. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to understand students' misconceptions and adjust practices to increase student outcomes.
 - While teams meet regularly and are often teacher led, teachers receive insufficient support to develop their own skills as facilitators of adult learning and team development. As a result, teams do not reflect together on their facilitation techniques in order to deepen their leadership and presentation skills to further develop their leadership skills.
- Formalizes structures that evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and leadership development in order to make enhancements that strengthen teachers' roles within a collaborative community of instructional leaders. (5.4)
 - The leadership team occasionally meets with teachers on an individual basis to informally discuss teacher team progress and facilitative leadership. Although the school uses formal data systems to monitor student progress at the classroom level, they lack an equally robust system to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher teams and leadership development in a manner that impacts on growing instructional leaders. While the school has a core group of instructional leaders that support the professional development of the faculty, a structure that enables sustainability overtime has not yet evolved to help strengthen the foundation of the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Soundview Academy	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
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