

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Grant Avenue Elementary School

Elementary School X449

**250 East 164th St.
Bronx, N.Y. 10456**

Principal: Kristin Erat

Dates of review: March 27 – 28, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Grant Avenue is an elementary school with 310 students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 45% Black, 52% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 51% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school makes effective organizational decisions that align well with school goals and positively impact teaching and learning, resulting in meaningful student work. (1.3)
 - The school's budget is well aligned to the literacy goals to support all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, in an effort to improve the proficiency levels in literacy, the school has invested in resources and academic intervention services for students in grades one through three. Students receive additional guided reading for 20 minutes each day. As a result, there is positive growth in literacy levels and student writing responses that were shared by the principal and teachers during data meetings.
 - Teachers have weekly structured meetings to focus on lesson plans, review student data and student work. Teachers meet regularly to review grade benchmarks in reading and writing and adjust their lessons accordingly. As a result, student tasks incorporate elements from the Depth of Knowledge wheel that assist teachers in designing rigorous tasks. Consequently, teacher lessons include these components and were evident during classroom discussions. These lead to student work samples that include elements that align to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), such as argumentative writing.
- Teachers align assessments to curriculum in order to improve teaching practices across the classrooms and meet instructional priorities. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams review data frequently to identify key elements that guide student learning. School leaders attended network training to support the school's goal to incorporate the CCLS in their units of study. During the summer, teachers developed math units with a focus on modeling and constructing viable arguments, leading to improvements in focused teaching practices and refinement of the math bundles. Teachers examine student work along with other formative and summative assessments that have been developed at the school, including end of unit assessments, to provide feedback on curricular and instructional decisions. For example, a review of an early childhood non-fiction unit of study revealed a need to scaffold student writing and include supporting details as part of the rubrics. As a result, teachers identified gaps in the curriculum and developed rubrics to guide students in determining the quality of their work and next steps, based on grade level standards and benchmarks. Math warm-ups and word problems have also been revised to include additional criteria from the CCLS. In addition, student thinking is an explicit expectation during discussions and is evident in their written explanations displayed across classrooms. Consequently, this information is tracked and used to adjust goals, targets, lessons and action plans for subgroups to support all learners.
- Families are active partners in school decisions, supporting an inclusive culture that welcomes parental involvement in support of student progress. (2.4)

- School leaders and staff provide many structured opportunities to engage families in the school. For example, every Friday families are invited to visit classrooms and participate in the learning experiences with their children. Parents participate in math games, experiments and publishing celebrations during this time. As a result, they feel welcome and informed about their children's academic progress related to the Common Core tasks, attendance and behavior. As many parents indicate, "teachers call, send letters home regularly and provide us with specific grade level information through their monthly newsletters." In some classes, students also write parts of the newsletters. Consequently, school and class level expectations are very clear to parents, who feel an incredible amount of support from the school and report great satisfaction with the school.
- The school has a functioning School Leadership Team (SLT) that engages families in important decisions that align with the school. One of the school's goals is to improve parent engagement. To that end, the school, in collaboration with the SLT, has invested in a Computer-based Academic Assessment System (CAAS) to track and gauge parental involvement in school. Even though there are many learning leaders who volunteer in the school daily, the SLT wanted to include more families to further develop their participation in meaningful ways, and the CAAS has been a useful tool in tracking this work. As a result, in the last family picnic in August, there were about 150 parents that participated, indicating an increase of about 25 more than the previous year. These events then positively impact on parental attendance at parent-teacher conferences, which is currently 98%, and attendance, according to the principal. Student attendance is currently 92%, meeting the June goal of 92%. In addition, the School Survey, in the area of safety and respect for teachers and parents, shows that the school scored above average with a score of 9/10, indicative of the school's collaborative culture.
- The principal has collaboratively developed a cohesive theory of action that embraces rigorous goals and promotes student growth. (3.1)
 - The principal has a clear vision for school wide improvement that focuses on curriculum that integrates the CCLS, professional development that fosters reflection, effective alignment of supervision to school goals and community involvement. Goals are clearly communicated to all members during formal and informal meetings and are evident in classrooms, student work folders, portfolios and communication between school and home. There is also an advisory curriculum to teach students social responsibility, leadership skills and peer-mediation skills. These goals are evident in classroom discourse, data reports, student work samples, and conversations with students, teachers and families. As a result, the school culture and planning processes accelerate student learning, as evident in writing samples, student reflections and school-based assessments. Consequently, progress reports on academics and social emotional learning skills shared by teachers, parents and administration, show positive trends with behavior, attendance and student growth. Critical thinking skills and reflective practices are evident in classrooms and throughout the school community.
 - The leadership and staff consistently engage families during SLT meetings and other informal sessions to leverage community based

support to improve student outcomes. Teachers send weekly communication to families around student academics and key events, such as Career Day. Parents participate in planning meetings around the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) and also focus on developing parent leaders in the school in support of school-wide goals. During the parent meeting, the Parent Association President and parent leaders shared their excitement about their involvement in the school and their support of the academic goals to promote student success. This extensive support, participation and communication between parents and staff are also reflected in the School Survey.

- School leaders support the development of teachers, resulting in clear expectations for improvement that promote professional growth. (4.1)
 - Careful reviews of formative and summative assessments, student work and teacher goals guide the collaborative work between teachers and administration, which aligns well to the school's goals and instructional expectations. For example, the use of assessments to provide student feedback is key in all conversations about differentiated support. Many teachers indicate that the Danielson rubrics help them to focus on their goals and build a common language across the school. Teachers meet regularly with the leadership to review student data, work samples and curricular tools in order to develop next steps for improvement. As a result, teachers receive clear feedback about progress towards meeting class and student goals, which is also shared with families. Teachers indicate that this feedback positively impacts their goals to develop students' thinking and discussion skills. Consequently, this practice fosters reflection, which promotes professional growth.
- Teachers benefit from extensive collaborative planning opportunities that promote shared leadership and improvement across the grades. (4.2)
 - Teachers meet regularly, using an inquiry approach, to engage in structured collaborations around how to embed CCLS in reading, writing and mathematics curricula. Tasks are designed to meet the various levels and learning styles of individual students and subgroups and focus on grade level benchmarks that align well with standards. Teachers rotate roles during meetings and use protocols to facilitate meaningful conversations with their colleagues. As a result, there is a shared understanding of how to develop critical thinking skills across content areas and common rubrics reviewed reveal growth in the quality of student writing samples.
 - Teacher teams analyze data from predictives, Acuity, running record levels and New York State English as a Second Language Assessment test to align their units and tasks to the CCLS, leading to a focus on lessons that teach explicit skills and strategies that support reading comprehension. As a result, teachers used the Depth of Knowledge framework to develop differentiated tasks, rubrics and set grade level benchmarks in reading, writing and math. This collaboration between teachers has led to improvements in student work samples, summative assessments from Academic Intervention providers and teacher data reports reviewed during teacher meetings and classroom visits.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the curricula to ensure that academic tasks cognitively engage all students in order to effectively meet their needs. (1.1)
 - The leadership and staff have worked collaboratively to align curricula with the CCLS in meaningful ways during weekly grade meetings and school-wide planning events. This work has evolved in reading and writing and led to improvements in student learning, based on a review of student data and CCLS tasks. However, curricular and academic tasks do not consistently emphasize rigorous habits and skills for all students, across all content areas. Therefore, all students are not cognitively engaged with appropriate tasks that scaffold or extend their learning.
- Expand the opportunities for differentiation of teaching strategies to maximize the opportunity for rigorous student learning that extends achievement. (1.2)
 - Across all classrooms, there is consistency in using a workshop model that includes a mini-lesson, group work time and a share out. This structure supports the belief that students need teacher modeling and time to practice skills in order to build their independence in learning. While there is a general level of student thinking, in some classrooms, teacher planning does not leverage high levels of challenge and does not always provide sufficient support for English language learners or students with disabilities. As a result, there are limited opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous learning across the school.
- Establish a strategic process for providing student feedback across the grades in order to deepen students' learning experiences. (3.3)
 - Teacher teams and individual teachers use common assessments in reading, writing and math to track progress and make adjustments throughout the year. However, the information for the subgroups and individual students is not comprehensive enough to target specific skills or competencies. As a result, teacher feedback during conferencing does not always provide students with guidance that would lead to strategies or skills that develop, scaffold or extend student learning, based on data that is developmentally appropriate for students. During classroom visits, some students are not able to use written teacher feedback to help them identify their next steps for learning to revise their work and show more complexity in their explanations or findings. Consequently, concepts are not developed extensively to deepen student learning, based on student writing samples and student responses during lessons.
- Develop strategic systems for monitoring progress towards school goals in order to make timely instructional adjustments. (5.3)
 - The school currently tracks school wide data on the Assessment Pro System in September, November and March in order to measure the quality of informational writing and the comprehension of mathematical concepts. In addition, they align, develop and revise their goals on the school's CEP based on student and staff data. However, school leaders and staff are still refining systems to measure progress towards meeting school, classroom and student goals throughout the year. During various

meetings, teachers and administrators report that this is an area for improvement. Except during those times mentioned above, they are not monitoring or gauging progress systemically. As a result, progress is not monitored sufficiently so that timely adjustments can be made for student cohorts or individual students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Grant Avenue elementary school 449X	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