

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

P.S. 723

K-12 all grades school X723

**3540 BIVONA STREET
BRONX
NY 10475**

Principal: CHRISTINE WALSH

**Dates of review: May 10, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Kathleen Lefevre**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 723 is a K-12 all grades school with 433 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 42% Black, 52% Hispanic, 3% White, 1% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 93% special education students. Boys account for 73% of the students enrolled and girls account for 27%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 83.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students benefit from coherent curricula planned using student data and work that results in high outcomes for individual students and student sub-groups. (1.1)
 - The school has made strategic decisions to focus on writing as a key standard to inform instructional adjustments across all content areas. The targeted focus on writing has included a school wide use of a common assessment tool that identifies age specific writing skills. This has resulted in an increased quality and quantity of student writing as evident in student portfolios. In addition, collaborative efforts by staff have resulted in school wide academic coherence, with connections between reading, writing, and other content areas. Across classes and subject areas, there is evidence of the Common Core shifts, specifically text-based answers and writing from different sources, has resulted in a higher level of student questioning and engagement on tasks aligned to subject matter, for all students.
- Students benefit from teacher pedagogy that emphasizes student strengths and multiple entry points that result in positive outcomes for students with a range of severe disabilities. (1.2)
 - The school's belief in student-centered learning is reflected in the teachers' instructional practices across classrooms. Differentiation of strategies and learning tasks for small groups or individualized instruction is evident across all classrooms in the different sites. Student groupings are based on ongoing analysis of assessment data. Instructional activities are designed to challenge students' ability to engage in the higher order thinking process and real world application of skills, including modeling, argumentative discourse, writing and inquiry skills, as observed in classrooms and student work in mathematics and science. The school has made extensive efforts to support the English language learners (ELLs) students with disabilities, providing targeted students with tiered activities and scaffolds designed to enhance their communication skills and 1:1 support as needed, resulting in 19 of the ELL students performing as well as their peers on the NYS assessments.
- School leadership thoughtfully structures school schedules and assignments to support instructional goals that result in increased teacher collaboration and student learning in order to meet student needs (1.3)
 - The school was able to use its budget to put in place a full-time coach for students in alternate assessment. The coach has supported collegial reviews of New York State Alternative Assessment (NYSAA) data collection, which has minimized administrative errors on datafolios. The use of staff time is structured so that teams of teachers are programmed for at least one formal collaborative team meeting each week. For students with autism, staff members are programmed so that they can collaborate with Queens College representatives to review extensive data on individual progress in time-on-task and communication skills. Common preps and grade level meetings have been implemented for the different grade levels to provide teachers with opportunities to examine student writing using the *Writing Continuum Framework* and to give feedback to each other on instructional next steps to support student progress along the writing continuum. Staff time is also structured so that teachers have opportunities for

inter-visitations in the areas of behavior management and verbal therapy which has resulted in increased consistency in implementation of best practice strategies, as evident in classes in the different sites. Based on schoolwide analysis of data, school administration made strategic decisions to implement cluster positions in math and English language arts (ELA) that support work aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). For example, in math, through real world applications using architecture, students have demonstrated increased skills in math practices, including modeling and use of arguments to defend their designs. Students in these classes have on average increased performance on NYS assessments by 10 percentage points. School schedules have also been structured to accommodate additional programming of outside organizations that yields high levels of student engagement across content areas, including the arts. These instructional decisions support all students in preparation for post secondary work.

- Individual teachers and teams, regularly analyze a range of data to guide needed adjustments to instructional decisions that result in higher student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms, administrators and teachers use a range of assessments that include, but are not limited to, NYS assessment data, Scantron, ABLLS, the Developmental Writing Continuum, and teacher constructed rubrics for students in both standardized and alternate assessment, as appropriate, to determine students' performance and progress toward mastery of goals. For example, teachers of students with severe language deficits demonstrated how they used ABLLS-R data, as well as behavioral data, to pinpoint behaviors that impact student learning and how they then generated plans to simultaneously "decrease behaviors that prevent learning" and to teach communication skills. As a result of using ABLLS-R, teachers recognized the need to use verbal cures to support the severe language deficits of students in alternate assessment programs. Consequently, students who were not responding to PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) or one step directives are now responding to one and two step commands, their name being called and have begun to make choices.
 - Teachers use data from the different assessments to group students for instruction; for example, based on performance on Scantron and the NYS assessments, students are functionally grouped for targeted reading instruction and may receive additional reading intervention support, such as Lexia and Achieve. Students who entered as non-readers have made average gains of several years and across classrooms students were proud to demonstrate their reading progress. In classrooms for students with autism and severe language deficits, students participate in individual tasks and center activities aligned with their IEP goals; student progress is monitored on a daily basis by teams of teachers and paraprofessionals to ensure that the individualized center activities are appropriate for the instructional level of the students.
- Students benefit from a safe environment that supports achievement of individual academic and social-emotional goals that positively impact students' academic success. (1.4)
 - A focus on positive behavior and social emotional goals is prevalent in all sites. The school provides a highly therapeutic environment which proactively addresses the needs of students through its integrated positive behavior supports, including *HAWKS*, *Emotional Literacy*, a Crisis Intervention Team, use of Social Stories, *Get Ready to Learn* and student advisories. To support student progress in meeting their goals, the school has implemented a zero period for student advisement so that students can review their progress in meeting their

academic and social-emotional goals, along with next steps for continued progress. In each class visited, students consistently demonstrated understanding of the positive behavior support system and were able to explain that the acronym “HAWKS” stood for Harmony, Accountability, Watchful, Knowledgeable and Safety. Students provided examples of how each component of the system helped them perform better in school and improve their behavior. Related service providers and teachers collaborate in the use of *Emotional Literacy* strategies to help students identify and talk about their emotions, reflect on mishaps and learn strategies to self-regulate. As part of emotional literacy, staff and students have developed student charters to identify how they want to feel and be treated in school; students have presented their charters at the District 75 Social Emotional Learning Conference. Parents reported that the school is “like a sanctuary” and that their children were welcomed as part of the school family. They noted that they would recommend the school because of its safety curriculum targeted to the needs of the students. As a result of these integrated supports, there has been a 40% increase of students earning high levels in the positive behavior intervention system (PBIS) program, improved attendance, a reduction in behavioral incidents and increased time-on task for students.

- Students benefit from guidance support and advisories that communicate high expectations for goal achievement that results in student self-monitoring of progress toward meeting their goals. (3.4)
 - Students in the school participate in advisories each day to review their daily point sheets and progress they are making toward meeting the goals in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). In all classes, students consistently identified their IEP goals and were able to indicate what they were doing to meet their goals; for example, one student expressed that he had learned to break down his work into small steps and another that she used a writing checklist after completing each assignment. Additionally, students were knowledgeable about the data binders that teachers assembled for each of them and were able to demonstrate understanding for the reviewer of the contents in the binder, as well as speak to their progress during this school year and the previous one.
 - Parents of students in the school indicated that there was a high level of communication from the school with regard to their child’s progress towards meeting their IEP goals. The school provides information for families through daily point sheets, communication notebooks, twice monthly mailings of progress reports, report cards, IEPs, phone calls to celebrate successes as well as to discuss challenges, invitations to school events and workshops addressing strategies to increase students’ communication and academic skills and positive behavior. Guidance support includes providing families with strategies for using social stories to increase their child’s appropriate behavior in social contexts. These supports allow families to help their children in meeting their next steps.
- Teacher teams engage in the systematic analysis of their inquiry work in order to further improve instructional practices that increase outcomes and provide students with post secondary readiness skills. (4.2)
 - Teachers across the eleven school sites participate in collaborative inquiry work. They come together to develop curriculum in writing and to review student work using the Developmental Writing continuum. Their inquiry work includes the analysis of student work in writing, the impact of verbal therapy on students with autism, student behavior management interventions and performance in reading. This informs decisions that guide school wide instructional and curricular

improvements in order to guide student's academic and social growth. As a result of their collaborative inquiry and analysis of their work, there is evidence of increased quality of students' writing across all content areas.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the effectiveness of feedback of classroom observations that results in improvement in student performance and teacher's professional growth. (4.1)
 - The school has set high standards for teaching that teachers are expected to meet, many devoting time beyond their professional responsibilities to improve their own practice. The school implemented a schedule of observation walkthroughs in September 2011 with feedback to teachers, and provided "look for's" aligned to Danielson's competencies and the Best Practices in Autism checklist. Beyond the school wide goals based on the citywide expectations and Danielson's competencies, each teacher has a personalized plan of professional development, completed at the beginning of the year by each teacher and submitted to school administration. The school has identified "questioning" as an area in which teachers need to refine their practice in order to increase student performance and critical thinking skills across all content areas. However, the school has yet to further refine its observations of teacher practice by focusing on areas within the domains of Questioning and Discussion technique(3b).Currently, not all teachers provide challenging questions in their lessons that support students in developing higher order thinking skills. Thus, limiting administrative feedback on the effectiveness of their questions in promoting higher order thinking, and next steps to guide targeted professional support for improved student outcomes.

- Increase alignment of the curriculum with instructional practices in response to student needs and the Common Core Learning Standards that result in accelerated student learning. (5.1)
 - School administration and teacher leaders meet on a consistent basis to assess student learning needs and adjust curricular practices and instructional decisions as needed to support the writing curriculum. They have integrated the CCLS into the curricula and have used performance tasks to identify gaps in student learning. However, the school has yet to formalize a system whereby there are interim checks of student progress and learning aligned with both the IEP and the CCLS. As a result, there may be missed opportunities for adjusting curriculum and instruction that result in improved student progress.

- Increase the monitoring of teacher teams and professional collaboration to support coherence between instruction, assessment and attendance across the eleven sites of the school. (5.4)
 - While the principal supports teacher teams and provides opportunities for teams to share effective practices, the principal does not yet have a system in place to formally monitor and evaluate the progress of each of the collaborative teams. As a result, opportunities may be missed that ensure a consistently high level of impact of teacher team collaboration on classroom instruction, assessment and attendance.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: P.S. 723	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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