

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Shell Bank

K014

2424 Batchelder Street

Brooklyn

NY 11235

Principal: Anne Tully

Dates of review: May 13-14, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Shell Bank is an intermediate school with 563 students from six through grade eight. The school population comprises 54% Black, 18% Hispanic, 17% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Across subject areas, curricula and tasks, with a focus on key standards, offer opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous learning experiences and demonstrate critical thinking. (1.1)
 - School leaders and teachers have refined curriculum maps in all subjects to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). These curriculum maps, which represent thoughtful integration of the instructional shifts required by the citywide instructional expectations, emphasize using academic language in class discussions and work products and drawing evidence from texts to inform, explain, and make arguments. As a result of this intentional focus, the school has in place robust curricula that are cohesive and comprehensive, include clear, descriptive units of study, and consider what students need to know across all grades to become college and career ready. Furthermore, students are engaging in rigorous habits, gauged by Hess' Cognitive Matrix and Webb's Depths of Knowledge, and are grounding their discussions, reading, and writing with evidence from the text. Additionally, across grades and subjects, all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) are required to demonstrate their thinking using the goals they have established for themselves, cross-curriculum, cross-content rubrics, as well as task-specific rubrics and planning pages. With an emphasis on key standards, such as engaging effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly, acquiring and using accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, and writing arguments that support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence in ELA and reasoning abstractly and quantitatively, constructing viable arguments, critiquing the reasoning of others, and using appropriate tools strategically in math, students perform tasks in data-based groups, take and support positions, write explanations, and share out their responses. In seventh grade ELA classes, for example, students engaged in Socratic seminar using a fishbowl protocol to analyze themes from the *Raisin in the Sun* that were collaboratively selected. Students researched textual evidence and indicated the relevance of themes such as dreams and hopes, race, family, poverty, and gender and how character development connects with those themes, using graphic organizers and varied forms of planning pages. As a result of the enacted curricula, students' habits, dispositions, and academic and personal behaviors such as persistence, thinking flexibly, communicating with clarity and precision, and creating, imagining, and innovating, have resulted in work products by all students, including the school's subgroups, that are of high caliber and demonstrate conceptual understanding and skills across content areas, grades, and classrooms.
- Teaching practices across the school leverage strategies that promote high levels of thinking, problem solving, and student ownership. (1.2)
 - Teaching strategies school wide, such as inquiry, collaborative learning, critical thinking, scaffolding, and questioning are systematic and explicit, are based on sequential plans aligned to the CCLS curricula, and consistently

provide multiple entry points and instructional interventions and extensions to ensure that all students, including ELLs, SWDs, and high-level learners, have access to curricula. In every classroom, text-dependent questioning by teachers reflected implementation of professional development provided by school leaders and coaches. For example, in one sixth-grade Math class, the teachers asked the students where they would use the principle of surface area and volume in the real world. The students then worked in pairs and triads to visually represent three-dimensional figures using nets comprised of rectangles and triangles. In a seventh grade Science class, students were asked to differentiate between mechanical and chemical digestion. Students also formulated their own questions that reflected their thinking and probed for further information such as "Does peristalsis help to push the food down? What would happen if we did not have saliva?" Furthermore, teachers across the school provide students with a variety of ways to engage in learning to achieve their targeted goals by incorporating the principles of the Universal Design for Learning, and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students best learn. They embrace the school's philosophy that students' needs and learning styles are addressed as evidenced by students working on data-based groups and engaging in collegial collaborations to make connections to real-world applications. They also enacted the school wide belief that students need to self-assess to be accountable for their own learning as evidenced by students rating their level of understanding of lessons on a scale from 1 to 10 and completing sentences prompts such as, "*The most important thing I learned today was; The best part of today's lesson was; and I still need help with.*" Additionally, the students responded to questions such as, "*What would you like to review during the next lesson?*" and "*What is one way today's lesson can be used in your life?*" This embracing of active student engagement, discussion, and inquiry as the approach to teaching and learning has resulted in optimized learning opportunities for students, who now accept more responsibility for their own learning and have become self-directed, independent learners.

- Teacher teams effectively analyze formative assessment data and student work data to glean information about students' progress and make meaningful curricula adjustments to meet needs of diverse learners (2.2)
 - Teachers meet frequently in grade level and subject area teams to collaboratively review student work, analyze formative grade wide assessments, and assess student progress after each performance task for evidence of student growth as well as gaps in learning. They use formalized data protocols from the National School Reform Faculty, which includes noting low-inference observations about strengths and weaknesses of the unit of study for looking at student work. Each protocol concludes with their thoughts about implications for future classroom practice and their thoughts about how they will change their instructional planning in light of their analysis of data. They also identify the type of guidance needed from the administration to support their work. For example, during an English language arts (ELA) team meeting, teachers examined student work from a performance task on a poetry unit. They noticed that the students are incorporating more academic vocabulary acquired from varied subjects in their writing, are employing the use of figurative language and are citing text evidence but need more support in developing their thesis statements. They followed this analysis by responding to questions regarding their instructional planning, next steps, and support needed from the administration. As a result

of this team structure, across all grades and subjects, teachers employ the use of system-wide conference notes and exit slips to frequently assess student learning. A comparison of students performing at proficiency levels 3 and 4 in two consecutive units of study in seventh grade, which required students to write an essay in which they take a position for or against the question “Are race relations still a problem in America in 2013?” and use literal and implied meaning of words to help them interpret a self-selected poem, respectively revealed that these robust structures for using ongoing checks for understanding and analyzing information on student learning result in responsive teaching that is adaptive to students’ needs and higher student-learning outcomes. This is evidenced by a 9% increase for all students performing at levels 3 and 4. Similarly, there was, a 5% increase for all English language learners, and a 6% increase for students with disabilities on those same tasks.

- School leaders’ effective use of protocols for observations and feedback of teacher practice leads to the attainment of school-wide goals for professional growth and the improved achievement of students. (4.1)
 - The principal and her assistant principals have created an explicit and widely communicated system for frequently observing teacher practices throughout the school year that results in relevant, timely, and actionable feedback, replete with next steps. They strategically review student data, feedback from formal and informal observations and professional development opportunities to continuously assess and adjust the specific supports provided to teachers. Additionally, periodic check-ins by administrators and the frequent review of evidence of teacher effectiveness, including student work, result in leaders’ ability to evaluate and support decisions aligned to a research-based framework for teaching, engage in norming their work, and make decisions and adjustments to school wide practices, including professional development, based on their understanding of effective school practice. Furthermore, they provide each teacher with rubric-delineated feedback loops and color-coded feedback charts, replete with comments, targeted next steps, and clear timelines for follow up for each observation relative to one of the three competencies on which the school is focused, specifically, designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques, and using assessment in instruction. With the strategic use of an internal server, school leaders systematically track and monitor their observations. Teachers have access to their individual reports whereas the leaders have access to all teachers as well as the capacity to filter by teacher, subject, grade, and next steps, which enables them to establish professional development and improvement plans based on teachers’ needs. As a result, teachers have significantly improved their practice in the prioritized competencies of designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques, and using assessment in instruction. Data analysis comparing teachers’ efficacy from the beginning of the year to the present reveals that teachers have moved along the trajectory of effectiveness in each category by 15%, 45%, and 30%, respectively, indicative of the benefits of the growing emphasis on frequent observations and feedback.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance structures that focus on improving attendance, social emotional learning, and advisement supports that ensure that students have increased

opportunities for developing their personal and academic behaviors. (1.4)

- Students state they feel cared about by adults, such as administrators, deans, counselors, and clinicians who want them to succeed and whose counsel they can seek if they have an issue. They also stated that when they are absent or late, they receive letters and phone calls and are attended to by their respective Deans and the school's counselors. These adults, who serve on the school's Student Support and Pupil Personnel Teams coordinate social-emotional learning and youth development services, including high school expectations and prerequisites as well as college and career readiness, and help to promote the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors. However, the school has not defined structures for students to express their opinions and contribute to school-level decisions that impact their learning environment and programs. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to provide a venue for student voice that fosters a sense of ownership and leads to greater student outcomes.
- Ensure that expectations for student progress and school wide success are communicated to include all stakeholders to develop a culture of mutual accountability to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students. (3.4)
 - The principal explicitly and frequently articulates her expectations, such as frontloading academic vocabulary, identifying big ideas and essential questions, asking open-ended higher-order questions to engage all learners, and checking for understanding through conferencing and exit slips through various venues including faculty conferences, teacher team meetings, and in grading and discipline policies, student and teacher handbooks, email communiqués, and parent letters. Teachers communicate with parents often through emails and phone calls and send quarterly student progress reports to the parents, customs that serve to engage families in supporting student learning and growth. Furthermore, school leaders solicit family input through the dissemination of surveys and invite parents to workshops on topics such as the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, tips for the High School admissions process, anti-bullying and cyber bullying, and ARIS, which reflect ideas and desires of the parents. However, there is limited use of translating multiple tools in the school's pertinent languages, resulting in missed opportunities to highlight special events and student successes for all families. Consequently, conditions for maximizing school-home communication around sharing of goals, plans, and solutions for learning to ensure the realization of the school school's vision are hampered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

| School name: Shell Bank | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Overall QR Score | | | X | | | | |
| Instructional Core | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products? | | | | X | | | |
| 2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels? | | | X | | | | |
| School Culture | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them? | | | X | | | | |
| Systems for Improvement | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products? | | | | X | | | |
| 3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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 | | | |
| 5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS? | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| UD | Underdeveloped | D | Developing | P | Proficient | WD | Well Developed |