

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The Walter Francis White School
Elementary-Middle School 041**

**411 Thatford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Theresa Siegel

Dates of review: April 29 - 30, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.-Gorski

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Walter Francis White School is an elementary-middle school with 595 students from grade kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 67% Black, 30% Hispanics, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 90.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school collaboratively engages in building teacher capacity and student work analyses that leads to key instructional decisions, and positively affects student progress. (4.2)
 - All teachers participate in study teams specific to their grades and content areas to examine student work and support instructional goals. Weekly meetings afford opportunities for teams to analyze work for students that they share, and discuss trends and academic gaps that lead to instructional adjustments. Teachers monitor the implementation of units of study and are able to create individualized and group academic intervention strategies so that all teachers are working toward achieving school goals to increase student progress and build a strong intervention toolkit and strengthen teacher capacity, as evidenced during classroom visits and teacher team meetings.
 - In collaboration with leadership, a certified special education teacher has taken the initiative to target students at-risk of not meeting the standards and grade level expectations. To attend to students in need of intensive instruction the teacher uses a computer-based remedial program from kindergarten to grade 5 called I-Ready, a Response to Intervention (RTI) program that tracks student progress and results in instructional adjustments that improve student learning as measured by student incremental growth in reading levels. Additionally, teachers know that they can learn under the tutelage of their colleagues so they seek out ongoing support that helps strengthen teacher development. For example, Teacher Leader Fellows (TLF) have been trained to provide feedback to teachers regarding Common Core aligned tasks and to build teacher capacity in writing, alignment, revisions and analyses of Common Core academic tasks. In addition to teachers identified and trained as Teacher Leader Fellows, (TLF) there is an Instructional Content Lead supporting the content areas. Teacher leaders are known to be school resources in English language arts and math as they work with the principal and assistant principals to set instructional goals, support colleagues with curricula alignment, and provide feedback so that teachers are able to make significant decisions and effective instructional adjustments.
- The school aligns resources to support instructional goals, and organize and program key staff and student time affording teachers opportunities to meet and improve instruction resulting in meaningful student work. (1.3)
 - Funding has been strategically allocated to reduce class size in grade 3, and to form an integrated collaborative team (ICT) teaching class and a special education class. This decreases the student to teacher ratio and allows intensive focus on students who are most in need and those eligible for testing for the first time, resulting in rigorous and individualized attention. Additionally, leadership funded an afterschool program and resources are precisely allocated to support students at-risk of not meeting standards in English language arts. All teacher teams are

programmed to engage in two common planning periods per week and one morning period to examine student work as part of the inquiry focus. Students share and explain strategies learned and used to make certain they understand challenging tasks. For example, one student shared, “I read the questions on a task before I read the text; it helps me understand the text better if I know the questions I have to answer.” These key decisions aim to provide the most effective instruction that results in elaborate student work products as evidenced in most student portfolios and discussed during student meetings.

- Across classrooms pedagogical practices are beginning to reveal a set of beliefs that lead to identifying various access points to meet student needs and accelerate student achievement. (1.2)
 - Leadership and faculty share a collective set of beliefs about how students learn best that is highly influenced by the school’s work around the Danielson framework. There are expectations that every teacher model aspects of the lesson and ensure that students are actively participating in student groups. Classroom environments engage in the practice, “I do, we do, you do!”, and by using this strategy teachers are able to model a part of the lesson, then guide students through similar exercises, and gradually release students to independent work. Moreover, the school’s focus on questioning techniques is generating effects of deeper thinking in student “turn and talks” and group discussions prompted by teacher designed questions that probe student thinking, such as, “Tell me how you got that answer!” Teachers encourage students to see mistakes as opportunities to learn and use higher-order thinking to unpack and stretch their learning. The school’s shift to highlight questioning techniques also recognizes this as a productive struggle as it works to meet the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). This is demonstrative of efforts made to use scaffolds and multiple access points that facilitate comprehension for all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the alignment of curricula to CCLS, instructional shifts, and to key standards, so that all learners engage in lessons that probe deep reasoning and higher order thinking. (1.1)
 - In collaboration with network support, data analyses has informed school decisions to heighten efforts in strengthening rigor within the design of coherent CCLS aligned writing tasks integrated into interdisciplinary curriculum maps incorporating social studies and informational texts. In spite of efforts to design curriculum maps that engage students in high-level tasks and activities, plans inconsistently include specific strategies designed to facilitate comprehension for relevant subgroups. Scaffolds and multiple points of access that afford students opportunities to build upon their learning are only alluded to in instructional plans and not yet school-wide practice. Consequently, limiting the closing of achievement gaps for all students, especially students with disabilities and other significant subgroups as evidenced in the school’s latest benchmark

results indicating that only 14% of students across grades are meeting grade level standards.

- Student data analyses reveal student needs in the areas of basic literacy skills. In efforts to increase student achievement and proficiency, the school invested in a literacy program geared at kindergarten through grade 3. Teachers embed instructional strategies in the comprehensive literacy program entitled, Treasures, to ensure that instructional needs are met, especially in the area of phonics and other basic literacy skills. In contrast to school efforts to increase student achievement, tasks designed do not routinely stress specific strategies to meet learning needs around students most in need, or for English language learners, students with disabilities, and those at or exceeding grade level. Most of the work noted in student work folders and numerous portfolios were practice sheets and did not consistently show authentic student work that encompassed deep thinking, thus limiting opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous academic tasks that showcase higher-order thinking and encourage high levels of reasoning.
- Improve the use of common assessments across the school to ensure that teachers use data analyses to make instructional adjustments that meet the needs of all students and increase student achievement. (2.2.)
 - Teacher teams collaborate on analyzing CCLS student work products from units of study to ascertain student needs, and make instructional adjustments. The school also utilizes Teachers College reading assessments, and running records to monitor student progress in kindergarten through second grade. Teachers College Writing Project baseline and benchmark assessments in grades 3 through 8 are administered periodically in English language arts and math. The school also incorporates the use of multiple rubrics aligned to units of study. For example, a fourth grade unit study about Native Americans and their influence on the development of New York required an end-of-unit formative assessment that directed students to write an informational essay that described the various aspects of Lenape cultures. This would include writing about the government, use of technology, cultural beliefs, and interaction with the environment. These essays were measured against a specific rubric for this assignment called, Lenape Native American rubric that gauged the required elements, ideas, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics. Classroom teachers and teacher teams use this data to enhance the curricula and make instructional adjustments around content knowledge and mechanics. In spite of these efforts, whole school data analyses to inform common learning gaps across all grades and provide a birds-eye-view so that teachers make needed instructional adjustments is inconsistent across the school. School data analyses are not sufficiently transparent to allow teachers to understand the value of analyzing the school trajectory and make purposeful curriculum and instructional changes that hone in on major skill deficiencies. As a result, student achievement is hindered as measured by the most recent Acuity math results indicating that in grades 6 through 8 only 21% of the students are meeting grade level math standards.

- Refine the observation process to provide supportive feedback for all teachers that envelopes teacher strength and affords opportunities for teacher development via explicit next steps. (4.1)
 - The school goal to improve teacher practice has prompted the espousal of the Danielson Framework as its research-based structure to leverage effective practices. The principal and assistant principals engage in individual and co-observations, with a lens to monitor teacher and student actions, and interactions, and then provide individual, group, and school-wide feedback to teachers. The school also utilizes Observation 360°, a software program that assists in organizing observational feedback provided to teachers. Leadership has also built into the school schedule an extra period as support for teacher growth, designed and provided as staff development for each grade. During this time leadership communicates numerous initiatives and/or provides feedback to staff regarding school plans. In contrast, written observations do not capture teacher improvements encouraged on previous feedback. Feedback to teachers of consistent and sequenced growth was not evident, or supportive of teacher efforts to show to pedagogical growth and engage in professional discourse around teacher goals. Lapses in time from one observation to the next, especially for new teachers do not afford teachers clear expectations, or relevant feedback around challenges with content knowledge, effective practices, and unequivocal next steps, resulting in missed opportunities to further build teacher capacity and increase student progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Walter Francis White School	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