

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

M.S. 061 Dr. Gladstone H. Atwell

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 17K061

**400 EMPIRE BOULEVARD
BROOKLYN
NY, 11225**

Principal: SANDRA TAYLOR

**Dates of review: Apr 4-5, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 061 Dr. Gladstone H. Atwell is a/an Junior High-Intermediate-Middle School with 1073 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 91% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is working to cultivate a respectful school environment that supports learning, encourages attendance and enhances personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
 - The school has a large population of students. To create an intimate culture, the principal strategically assigned staff. Teachers are assigned to specific cohorts of students based on their strengths. The assignment of grade level assistant principals, counselors and deans, assures that students are well known. The guidance staff conducts group and individual counseling sessions, while the substance abuse and prevention specialist conducts in class lessons on various topics including adolescent issues, leading to students articulating that they feel comfortable seeking guidance and academic intervention services when needed. The principal has created structures to ensure information around the Danielson research-based framework of teacher effectiveness and Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) are shared, thus, promoting a culture that supports teachers' and students' academic growth. The school is divided into three academies (Global, Apex and Britou-Moore) and students are designated team members. The intervention specialists coordinate student support systems that address behaviors impeding student progress. The deans, family worker, assistant principals and principal provide additional support for coordinating attendance and outside resources. The school has developed academic and social interventions, to offer support and provide a safe haven after school. As a result, the school is reaching students and supporting their emotional needs as evidenced by students who state they feel safe in the school.
- The school conveys expectations that are beginning to promote parent involvement and support learning so that staff, students and families work together toward achieving the school's goals. (3.4)
 - The school has begun to create a team to support learning consisting of principal, assistant principals and teachers. The principal utilizes faculty conferences and grade and team meetings to convey clear behavioral and professional expectations. In addition, the Network has supported the school by providing professional development for teachers in the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Danielson Framework. As a result, teacher attendance is improved, routines established, data informs instruction, and teachers are holding themselves accountable for student learning. Student work on display throughout the school serves as exemplars, and motivates students to achieve. Additionally, students are attaining the academic, behavioral, and social skills necessary to be recognized as "*Student of the Month*" and members of *Arista/Archon*, all of which are readying students for success in high school and beyond. The school distributes and conducts a review of the Code of Discipline, attendance, academic requirements, course outlines, contracts and a school-wide grading policy that enables students and families to understand the relationship between attendance, social behaviors and hard work to increase academic achievement. The school communicates some expectations to their students and families that learning is a continual process. For example, students receive holiday English language arts (ELA) and math packets to complete at home with their caregivers.

Parents receive quarterly progress reports on their children's progress to share some feedback on their performance. This is beginning to build better communication and strengthens the relationships with families in the school, as articulated by parents during meetings with this reviewer. Consequently, the school is showing some improvements in building high expectations of student learning for its staff, students and families.

- Most teachers collaborate in teams to develop meaningful tools to analyze data and create curriculum to plan instruction, with a lens towards improving student learning. (4.2)
 - The school is beginning to use an inquiry approach to address necessary changes in curriculum, instruction and student outcomes. Most teacher teams throughout the school are involved in some aspect of school improvement efforts. Grade level teams are charged with examining ways to ensure that both teachers and students will be ready to meet higher standards. While some teams use an approach, other teams and committees engage in action planning for student intervention to support better engagement for improved learning.
 - The eighth grade English language arts teacher team has begun collaborating on assessment and students. For example, they analyzed essays the students had written. Teachers discussed the different aspects of the essays and determined areas of strength and weakness for targeted students. As a result, eighth grade essays, particularly introductions and conclusions, have shown some improvements based on the team's data analysis around some areas of focus.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the coherence of curricular modifications so that academic tasks promote higher levels of thinking and cognitive engagement for all students in order to close the achievement gap. (1.1)
 - The school is working to develop a curriculum that is aligned to the CCLS and city wide instructional shifts. While teams have emphasized key standards and shifts, they have not yet unpacked the curriculum strategically or aligned lessons and resources to reflect appropriate challenge across grade levels and subjects. Specifically, the same lessons and resources are used across grade levels. Consequently, this limits the opportunity to challenge all students to demonstrate higher order thinking, access and transfer skills across the curriculum to support their needs. . A review of curriculum maps shows that teachers have made adjustments to refine some of their units of study, however in English language arts, teachers plan weekly with minimal guidance to revise curriculum and academic tasks do not typically emphasize higher order skills across the grades. In addition, lessons do not consistently provide accessibility via multiple entries for all students to practice skills needed to improve. Consequently, student progress and performance data has not yet successfully closed the achievement gap, based on a review of student work and the school's Progress report, in which the school received a grade of "C", for the past three consecutive years.

- Refine teaching practices to promote greater consistency in strategically differentiating instruction so that lessons challenge and engage all students in their learning and result in meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - The school articulates beliefs around how students learn best as the workshop model, project-based learning, scaffolding and skills-based differentiation. However, most classrooms visited did not reflect the school's beliefs of differentiation and scaffolding. Across classrooms, teachers delivered instruction whole group and did not provide meaningful opportunities for differentiated learning. Many of the tasks were the same for all the students, which resulted in some students finishing assignments, while others needed additional support. In classrooms that had many English language learners (ELL's) and students with disabilities (SWD's), scaffolding efforts were limited to teachers reading text and questioning was minimal. As a result, classroom interactions are mainly teacher to student, leading to minimal levels of discussion among students. As such, there are missed opportunities for students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to engage in higher levels of thinking and participation.
- Refine curriculum aligned-assessments and teacher checks for student comprehension, to enable the school to further determine the progress of all learners and inform adjustments to curriculum and instruction. (2.2)
 - The school uses a wide variety of assessments such as Acuity, summative State data and school created formative assessments. For example, there are uniform assessments, based on the "Skill of the Week" for English language arts and math skills acquisition. Teachers have begun to look at student work and classroom assessments to determine trends, but this emerging practice is centered on scoring of student work around the previously identified skills in summative and periodic assessments and does not align with the standards indicated on each unit of study. The skill-based focus of classroom assignments contributes to teacher confusion around next steps to support students' growth, as outcomes fluctuate from unit to unit. Across classrooms, instructional strategies are delivered as whole group instruction and there is little evidence of ongoing checks for student understanding during classroom instruction. Some teachers use student-teacher conferences to assess individual student progress; however this is not yet an embedded practice across classrooms. As a result, student understanding is not always readily assessed, which limits the potential for specific student support and instructional adjustments to support all learners.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: M.S. 061 Dr. Gladstone H. Atwell	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