

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**P.S. 091 The Albany Avenue School**

**Elementary 17K091**

**532 ALBANY AVENUE  
BROOKLYN  
NY, 11203**

**Principal: Tessa Alleyne**

**Dates of review: February 20-21, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 091 The Albany Avenue School is a/an Elementary school with 668 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 92% Black, 5% Hispanic and 1% White. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes data-based organizational decisions aligned to the school's instructional goals, on the use of resources and structures times for teams in order to promote improvements in student and adult learning. (1.3)
  - The principal has allotted funding to expand classroom libraries, implement programs and expand technology throughout the school in support of the school's literacy goals relating to student achievement in English language arts (ELA). Funds are prioritized to purchase trade books, programs and SMARTboards to access information and promote literacy development within all classrooms, which are aligned with the school's instructional goals. For example, the principal purchased Foundations, a primary literacy program, to assist struggling students in the early grades with phonics and fluency. Teachers incorporate Foundations skills lessons into their daily language arts classroom instruction. These lessons focus on sequenced skills that include print and alphabet awareness, phonemic awareness, decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and spelling. As a result students are demonstrating listening, critical thinking and speaking skills, which are evident positively via running records and increased Fountas and Pinnell reading levels. Additionally, school leaders have made a thoughtful effort in ensuring that every student has the opportunity of exposure to various programs, such as, Project Intervention, Saturday Academy, Spring Institute and Early Bird to assist students with testing strategies to strengthen students' skills in order to support increased comprehension.
  - The school's schedule was designed to allow teachers to meet weekly in teams, to discuss and plan instruction for targeted students in alignment with the school's instructional goals. Teachers use this time to create grade level non-fiction units, academic tasks aligned to the standards, and rubrics aligned to the units to assess student performance. The use of structured programming advances the school's goal to improve instruction and accelerate outcomes for students through rigorous academic tasks as evidenced by a 20% increase in students' performance on literacy unit tests since the beginning of the school year.
- The tone of the building is inviting and welcoming, reflecting the school's focus on providing a safe environment where all students are known, promotes student learning and encourages parental involvement. (1.4)
  - Teachers state that "staff work well together"; parents state that they "love how the school goes out of its way to help them" and students state that, "we love school." Based on the collegial atmosphere throughout the building, staff members expressed during the teacher team meetings, their freedom to share new strategies amongst each other. Students also shared that they genuinely enjoy being in the school and that adults are available to them in a variety of ways. Parents and the students consistently refer to the designated school safety officer, secretaries, guidance counselors, the nurse and Parent Coordinator as "go to" people if they have a problem, or just need to talk with an adult. The school engages all learners in targeted interventions, such as classroom behavior management chart where students are reminded of expectations and work towards individualized goals which improve student behaviors. Consequently, there has been a decrease in

principal's suspensions, which declined from 52 last year, to 15 suspensions to date. The decrease in incidents has improved academic performance, where students are able to concentrate and produce higher quality work products, which are displayed throughout the classrooms, portfolios and hallways. The school has a safe and respectful environment and is using data from the Learning Environment Survey (LES) and actual student behaviors to improve behavioral issues, especially with students who have repeated incidences of oppositional and physical aggression, who are academically and socially at risk as evidenced in incident reports. As a result, more students are receiving targeted supports, including lunchtime interventions with support staff which is showing some improvement in their behavioral and instructional outcomes.

- Teacher teams reflect on their practice, provide each other with meaningful feedback that leverages changes in pedagogy and have a voice in decisions to improve student outcomes. (4.2)
  - All teachers engage in the school-wide commitment of analyzing data and student work on a weekly basis to make informed decisions and changes in practice that address the needs of their students. In a third grade teacher team meeting, teachers assess and discuss student work via the inquiry approach. They provide each other with suggested practices and advice on possible instructional choices that can positively impact the academic progress of all students. In a fourth grade teacher team meeting, teachers analyze the Unit 2 Mathematics Performance task and make decisions around the implication of instruction based on their students' performance and agreed-upon next steps to ensure granular instructional focus on student academic performance. In addition, teachers are empowered to perform inter-visitations, irrespective of years of experience, for further support and feedback on lesson and/or strategy delivery. This practice leads to a more cohesive sense of teamwork and evidence of distributive leadership. The teacher teams are led by "lead" teachers chosen by the leadership. The teacher leaders have a voice in determining topics discussed and take responsibility for informing their colleagues of the content of discussions and decisions made. As such, the school has leveraged staff and improved instructional strategies evidenced by student work.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure that all students are actively engaged in challenging assignments and curricula that are planned with opportunities to create meaningful work products in order to close the achievement gap. (1.1)
  - The school aligns its literacy curriculum with Teachers' College and the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). There is a strong emphasis on raising the level of students' performance in reading and writing. There is also an expectation that teachers will use higher order questions and explicit academic language strategies across all content areas. However, there is inconsistent evidence of how learning tasks to accomplish these expectations are implemented. Across classrooms, some tasks did not engage students or challenge students to synthesize and apply their knowledge to deep reasoning. Additionally, content area lessons are not suitably adjusted for identified subgroups, including English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities (SWDs).

Therefore, assignments vary widely in terms of rigorous learning experiences for many students and are uneven across the school.

- Improve teacher practice across all classrooms that promote active student participation and elicit higher-order thinking skills with multiple entry points for all students to produce meaningful work products. (1.2)
  - In keeping with the school's belief of how students learn best, teachers engage in the workshop model and students engage in accountable talk and partner work. Across the classrooms, students are utilizing the strategy of "turn and talk". Lesson planning and classroom activities reflect a school wide commitment to these beliefs. However, the usage of higher order questions to engage students in persuasive and/or argumentative conversations are inconsistent. For example, in some classes observed, teachers posed basic recall questions, while in others students participated in deep discussions that engage the learner. Additionally, not all activities appropriately address students at their level or their learning style. While students are grouped in classrooms with high numbers of ELLs and SWDs; there are inconsistencies of specific strategies to support these students in accessing language, directions for tasks and scaffolded activities. In other classrooms, students who are finished with an assigned task have to wait for the rest of the group before proceeding to another level of work. Consequently, some students across classrooms are excluded from fully participating in the lesson and limited in their ability to cognitively engage in assignments at their appropriate level in order to support increased proficiency.
- Build upon individual teacher practice of consistently checking for understanding to inform instruction and provide feedback to students to improve outcomes. (2.2)
  - The school uses a wide array of assessments, such as Running Records, Baseline Acuity, Performance series, rubrics, as well as classroom assessments. The principal has defined clear expectations for teachers to use explicit strategies to ensure that all students comprehend concepts presented in lessons. Some teachers use mid-lesson questioning to assess whole class understanding. In a few classes, teachers utilized conferencing notes to assess performance. However, these assessment strategies are inconsistent across classrooms and in some lessons checking for understanding is only evident at the end of the lesson. Therefore, feedback to students is general and limits students' ability to take targeted steps to demonstrate their learning and improve their work products. There is evidence of some students in the upper grades monitoring their understanding and gauging performance. However, this is not embedded across the school. Consequently, not all students take ownership of their learning to detect when they are ready to move on to the next academic level. Teachers' inconsistent use of ongoing classroom checks of students' understanding, limits opportunities to inform their instruction and provide students with appropriate feedback, in order to support increased progress for all learners.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 091 The Albany Avenue School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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					
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed