

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Sheldon A. Brookner School

Public School 135

684 Linden Boulevard

Brooklyn

NY 11203

Principal: Trevlyn McRae

Dates of review: May 30-31, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Luz Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Sheldon A. Brookner is an elementary school with 775 students from PK through grade 5. The school population comprises 93% Black, 4% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes key decisions around the budget, assignments and scheduling aligned to the school's instructional goals to increase learning for all students. (1.3)
 - The principal's budgeting coupled with staff input; result in strategic use of resources that are well aligned to the principal's performance goals and the Comprehensive Education Plan. Budget allocations and scheduling are made to support two sites quite a distance apart from each other. Expert consultants work with administrators, coaches and teachers to implement reciprocal teaching strategies in order to increase student participation and discussion. Literacy and math specialists collaborate with and coach individual teachers and teacher teams, at the two sites, who all share responsibility for targeted groups of students. Together, they plan and design tasks and rubrics to support the development of students' ability to use clear and relevant evidence to support their statements and assertions in essays aligned to the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). In addition, other initiatives such as Learning Through an Expanded Arts Program (LEAP) which bring teaching artists into the classroom for upper grade students, and the (PENCIL) organization that differentiates focus support for students, fosters learning and critical thinking through the arts. Consequently, comparisons with writing baseline data reveal progress in students' using evidence to support their point of view in writing as noted on rubrics developed by teachers.
 - Teacher assignments and student program groupings are strategic as seen in the Striving toward Academic Recognition (STAR), Javits, General, and Collaborative Team-Teaching (CTT) classes. As a result, students receive interventions in a rich learning environment and benefit from the challenges to achieve at a higher level. All teachers collaborate on multiple grade level planning teams to strengthen student work by analyzing performance assessment results, adjust their teaching practices and curriculum maps at the end of each unit, refine performance tasks so that individual students and group of students, including students with individualized education plans, are challenged and engaged. This has lead to positive trends in student performance task results as evident during the 5th grade team teacher inquiry meeting. The math performance task #2 required students to assess their understanding of adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators. Noted trends indicate that students were able to rename fractions, their explanations were more comprehensive, improvement was noted on computations, and students demonstrated a deeper understanding that in order to add or subtract fractions with unlike denominators, they needed a common denominator. As a result, there was a 19% increase of the number of students, including students with individualized education plans and English language learners, who have improved their ability to reason abstractly and quantitatively, as per CCLS for mathematical practices, as compared to results from math performance task #1.

- The school is a safe, nurturing environment which cultivates effective partnerships and students appreciate the high level of support they receive that fosters their personal and academic behaviors. (1.4)
 - Students readily embrace the school's motto "Safety, Trust, Attitude and Respect (STAR)" and all efforts to support students' needs are guided by this unifying mission, which supports the school's goals. A deep sense of structure, trust, respect and warm permeates the entire school community. A review of the school's incident reports, led to the adoption of the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) "STAR Bucks" initiative. This school wide initiative involves all members of the school community who monitor students' behavior. Positive behaviors, including demonstration of specific character traits such as respect, excellence, achievement, perfect attendance and responsibility allow students the opportunity to earn PBIS STAR Bucks as a reward. Students then save and redeem these STAR Bucks to participate in music or/art special events, jamborees, or purchase items from the STAR Bucks store. This focused initiative has led to the reduction of incidents in OORS, and notable positive behaviors of targeted students who required more tangible incentives. Additionally, the Student Council meets monthly with the principal and provides input in activities that best meet their needs. For example, the boys wanted cooking as a choice of selected clubs available on Friday afternoons. As a result of their input, students now have cooking as a choice, in addition to origami, yoga, drama, bookmaking and creating ocean drums. Moreover, abundant partnerships at the school, including Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LEAP), Price Waterhouse Coopers Investments and Savings Firm and the Brooklyn District Attorney's Legal Lives Program, support students' active participation in shaping school-wide decisions, thereby bolstering self-esteem and the development of leadership skills.

- A wide range of assessments and common measurements, allow leaders and faculty to have an informed understanding of student performance, resulting in interventions to positively impact student achievement. (2.2)
 - Teachers use student work samples and individual conference notes, along with exit slips at the end of each lesson, to analyze students' work and provide them with immediate feedback. In addition, Acuity results, running records, Achieve 3000, Read 180, benchmark assessments, performance tasks in English language arts and math and grading practices, are all aligned to the CCLS in order to gauge students' strengths and needs, as well as the effectiveness of the taught curricula. In one 1st grade class during independent reading, students were able to use key details in a text and schema to make inferences. In a 5th grade class during a book discussion of the Text "Eleven", students critically analyzed the text to gain a deeper understanding of the main character. Students engaged in a range of collaborative discussions building on each other's ideas, and sharing specific character traits of the main character. Additionally, they were able to critique the statement "with maturity comes wisdom" and explicitly cited specific aspects of the standards. As such, students are becoming cognizant of the connection between the tasks and the expectations espoused by the CCLS. All teachers utilize rubrics and most align written feedback on students' work

with the specific rubric being used in order to note students' strengths and needs. Consequently, teachers have an understanding of students' academic performance relative to select standards, with the goal of increased student achievement.

- Teacher teams create common performance task assessments and use the results to measure student progress toward specific goals. Assessments results, including student work products, are reviewed by grade level teams as evidenced during the math 3rd and 5th grade team meetings. The data is also used to provide relevant written feedback to students to increase their achievements levels, as well as evaluate and revise units of study and individual lesson plans. As such, teachers use common measurements to inform decisions on appropriate interventions during class using a Differentiated Instructional Plan (DIP), direct support from coaches during push-in programs, and implement instructional strategies to support student progress in identified skills.
- The school has strategically developed coherent curricula, including the arts, aligned to key State Standards and refined learning tasks in order to promote mastery of skills to engage all learners. (1.1)
 - School leaders and staff deliberately modified or adjusted the curricula to reflect the integration of the CCLS and shifts in the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) with a focus in literacy. The curriculum reflects Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to design lessons and activities that allow students choice and challenge students to think critically. Across classrooms, students are engaged in discussions using accountable talk prompts, and throughout learning tasks which allow different learners multiple access point into learning. Activities are Common Core Standards based with the infusion of more informational texts. Students use these texts to practice and to provide evidence to support their thinking and opinions, as evident during Group Discussion in a 5th grade English language arts class. In another 1st Grade class, students worked on using text clues and their schema to make inferences. Throughout the school, it is common practice for students to utilize Reciprocal Teaching in (Grades 2-5) and De Bono's Six Thinking Hats strategies (Grades K&1). Additionally, arts programs are embedded in the curriculum in order to promote student engagement in the learning process. Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LEAP), is implemented across multiple grades engaging students through different modalities.
 - Leaders and faculty continuously refine instruction and learning tasks to develop students' higher order thinking skills and ensure all students are cognitively engaged. In response to findings and trends noted from the CCLS performance tasks results, grade level teams examine evidence to determine if targeted students have met learning goals or further actions are needed in planning for these students, as evident during the 3th grade math Inquiry team meeting. Teachers utilized the tuning protocol to present student performance tasks results from targeted students and determined their next learning steps. Consequently, teachers adjust strategies and instructional plans for a variety of learners including students with disabilities and English language learners, so that all students are engaged in learning. As a result, there has been an increase in student performance from the first performance task to the second one administered in May.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater consistency across classrooms in the use of questioning and student participation so that students demonstrate higher order thinking skills that result in greater student outcomes. (1.2)
 - Through the use of essential questions and data-based peer groupings, classrooms practices reflect a clear set of beliefs about how students learn best that is shared across the school community and embedded in teaching practices. In some classroom visits there were some examples of student engagement in higher order thinking through questioning and higher order student discussion. For example, in one 4th grade collaboratively taught math class students were asked “How can you use equivalent fractions to change a fraction to a decimal?” a problem was presented and the students discussed the problem in pairs and in another 5th grade English language arts class (ELA), students analyzed the similarities and differences in points of view in a text. Teachers are beginning to employ open-ended questions to spark discussions. However, this is not a consistent practice across the school. For example, in many classrooms questions and answers are most often between teacher and individual students. Consequently, teaching strategies to support multiple levels of learning with thought-provoking questions, conversations that give students the chance to support their views with evidence, and use questions as a way to learn more, are not yet the norm across grades and content areas.
- Build upon the consistency of the teacher observation and feedback process to ensure closer alignment to the common teaching framework in order to elevate professional growth and student achievement. (4.1)
 - The principal and assistant principals conduct formal and short frequent observations and share written, verbal comments and informal feedback with individual teachers. However, the next steps are not consistently or strategically aligned to the tool; neither is the feedback suitably effective, as it does not cite evidence from instructional practices. As such, at times, teachers do not receive actionable feedback. This results in missed opportunities to accelerate teacher growth and students outcomes.
 - Teachers participate in external and internal professional development opportunities. Additionally, they are asked to select a personal competency for growth from the research based tool used by the school. However, school leaders do not yet strategically use observation data or link to the identified competency for improvement. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to help teachers achieve optimal levels of performance and impact student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Sheldon A. Brookner 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