

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Isaac Remsen Elementary PS 147

K147

**325 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Sandra Noyola

Dates of review: March 18 - 19, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S 147 Isaac Remsen is an elementary school with 258 students from Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 39% Black, 59% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 14% 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 91.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The administration effectively uses a research based teaching framework to support teacher development with targeted feedback leading to enhanced pedagogy and improved student performance. (4.1)
 - The school is participating in the Teacher Effectiveness Program (TEP). School leaders and teachers systematically provide all teachers with actionable, instructional feedback that is guided by the Danielson's Framework for Teaching and the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), thus offering on-going support for developing common professional language and understanding of the expectations for effective teaching. Frequent cycles of classroom observations specifically target planning and preparation, questioning and discussion techniques, and assessment. Each observation is followed with strategic feedback such as "plan more high order questions using the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels," or "discussions should enable students to talk to each other without teacher interference." In addition, administrators continuously include student work and achievement data in their conferences with teachers. Furthermore, professional development is effectively aligned with suggestions as evidenced by observation reports, thus meeting the needs of individual teachers. Several teachers said that they receive applicable suggestions with clear next steps that also encourage self-reflection. As a result, teachers are demonstrating improvement of their instructional practice as evidenced by the data collected by the principal for the Teacher Effectiveness Program.
 - The principal collaboratively leads professional development based on teacher input. Teachers contribute to setting the agendas for staff development and participate in the principal's instructional cabinet. Professional development opportunities, in-house and external, are included in the school calendar and displayed in a main hallway to inspire participation and encourage improved practice. Additionally, the principal made several strategic key decisions in teacher assignments this year to improve student achievement and promote faculty leadership. For example, a 4th grade teacher joined the 3rd grade team to support his colleagues with his capacity and knowledge of the next grade benchmarks. Similarly, a teacher of English as a second language leads the school's Response to Intervention team by sharing his strategies and approaches to meeting the needs of English language learners. These decisions result in improved student performance as evidenced by most recent assessment showing that 51% of identified students from grades 1 to 5 have improved in their reading, exceeding the school's goal of 41%.
- Across the school teacher teams make effective and collaborative instructional decisions resulting in student improvement. (4.2)
 - All teachers meet twice weekly during the school day and once a week during the extended day time to discuss planning of instructional units and lessons and to analyze student work. Agendas and protocols from these meetings reveal that teachers use this time effectively by engaging

in inquiry work centered on probing student results. They also make school-wide decisions about curriculum and share instructional resources. With these carefully planned structures, teachers have ample opportunities to discuss effective pedagogical practices ensuring student improvement. For example, on one team, a special education teacher guided his colleagues into collaborative looking at student work to determine a child's strengths and needs based on a common assessment in writing, and into delineating next instructional steps to improve teaching practice in giving specific feedback to students. Another team, led by a grade level leader, worked specifically on setting teaching points, based on student achievement data, for a new unit of study in literacy. As one teacher said, meeting in teams and following inquiry and planning protocols allows her to align her teaching and try new strategies that she learns from her colleagues. As a result, teachers' coherent decisions about next instructional steps have strengthened pedagogical capacity and improved student achievement across the school as evident in students' writing products.

- The school uses common assessments to provide actionable feedback and next steps to students and teachers resulting in effective instructional adjustments that meet all students' needs. (2.2)
 - All teachers across classrooms use standards based 4-point rubrics to assess reading responses, personal narratives and informational writing as well as math performance tasks embedded in units of study. Moreover, the school has created a grading policy that is aligned with all assessments and adjusted report cards for parents to indicate student growth toward grade level benchmarks. In addition, teachers create rubrics for writing in child friendly language, that are based on the assessment continuum from the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). As a result, the "glow and grow" feedback they give to students is cohesive, specific and inclusive of improvement strategies. For example, teachers give feedback such as "check your answer by using the multiplication or the subtraction method," or "use the word wall or a dictionary to add more descriptive words." Likewise, all children across the grades receive timely and actionable feedback on their work, either as a "glow and grow" or in a form of next steps as evidenced in classroom visits and teacher conference notes. Additionally, the school leaders conduct "data talks" with individual teachers that are held four times a year and include a monitoring process for student work and achievement based on current data. Therefore, teachers are able to guide students toward improvement in small groups and provide them with specific learning strategies to improve their work as evidenced in their goal setting forms. These practices result in timely instructional adjustments that meet student needs.
 - Teachers in all grades use and analyze a variety of common assessments that are aligned with the CCLS and are inclusive of baseline and end of unit assessments, reading benchmarks and periodic assessments such as Acuity. Furthermore, teachers across the school track student progress by using protocols for looking at student work in reading, writing and math that outline performance patterns within units. These protocols include planning for small groups and making timely instructional adjustments like possible mini-lessons most students might need to improve. Additionally, the school uses a system of monitoring

student progress based on goal setting in student-teacher conferences that afford individual children an opportunity to self-assess by using rubrics and checklists aligned to their work and articulate strategies for improvement. Consequently, teachers effectively use student results to plan teaching points and flexible groups, thus ensuring progress toward meeting grade level benchmarks and standards for all students, including English language learners and special education students who are assessed with more frequent cycles. As a result, 15 out of 18 identified English language learners in grades 1-5 moved to a higher reading level comparable to their general education peers as evidenced by the school tracking system of the Fountas and Pinnell reading benchmarks.

- The principal makes strategic decisions to use resources in alignment with school goals that result in strengthened instructional capacity and improved student work across the school. (1.3)
 - The school's instructional goals for the year are to improve student independent reading levels, proficiency in writing and in number sense and operations by prioritizing key standards in reading, writing and math and by integrating units of study aligned with the CCLS. Administrators align the budget to partner with organizations that offer strategic and adequate instructional support for the faculty and extended learning opportunities for the students. For example, a partnership with CITYatwork (Community Initiatives to Teach Youth), paired with a creative use of classrooms, allowed the school to create two open access rooms, one for science and one for social studies research, thus providing all students with opportunities access necessary resources and conduct science experiments in a lab.. Similarly, the principal secured a professional development partnership with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project as part of long-range action plans and to ensure on-going support with the standards aligned curriculum in literacy, and effective professional development for teachers, school leaders and parents. As a result, the majority of teachers, including special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, participate in professional development days scheduled at Columbia University and then turn-key to their colleagues during regularly scheduled grade level and faculty conferences. These initiatives and partnerships are increasing learning opportunities that connect to the school's vision of creating a community of life-long learners and have resulted in increased academic rigor evident in meaningful student responses in reading and writing informational text.
 - Teacher programs and student schedules are structured to provide time for grade level teams to regularly meet minimally twice weekly for focused inquiry, adjusting curriculum, data talks, or professional development. The principal has established clear expectations for teacher team meetings and is holding them accountable for the outcomes of these meetings and student work. For example, Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers have opportunities to meet and analyze student work and progress towards benchmarks. Additionally, non-classroom teachers are thoughtfully scheduled to work with their grade level partners. They participate in collaborative inquiry work and align their planning pedagogy to meet all students' needs. Furthermore, adjustments are made to structure team meetings with the ESL teacher to identify content language needs and develop instructional strategies that support development of academic

vocabulary. Consequently, all teachers have planned and structured opportunities to work on the improvement of academic tasks and building professional capacity as evidenced in increased student progress, especially in reading and writing.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that academic tasks across content areas include well planned supports and extensions for all learners to be cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - The school has aligned curricula and lessons with the CCLS and the CIE as revealed by a review of curriculum artifacts and the school's planning calendars of instructional units of study in reading, writing, and math. For example, a math planning calendar, based on the Go Math curriculum, lists priority mathematical practices such as "model with mathematics" and "constructs viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others." Similarly, the English language arts curriculum and unit plans across grades include textual evidence in writing and discussions, domain specific vocabulary, assessments and opinion and argument writing in upper grades. All curriculum maps indicate planning for academic tasks with essential questions, thus reflecting the school's effort to teach higher order thinking skills. While guiding questions and strategic thinking are embedded in maps and lesson plans across grades in efforts to promote college and career readiness, in classes we visited teachers sometimes used higher order questioning techniques that would promote development of rigorous habits for all learners, including high achievers. Although plans reflect the use of data and student work to engage diverse learners, there are still gaps in how high achievers and struggling students access rigor in academic tasks, thus limiting their ability to expand their learning.

- Enhance instructional practices across the school so that in all classrooms students are actively engaged in higher order thinking and participation. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, teachers scaffold instruction and consistently provide multiple entry points to facilitate student learning and participation through flexible grouping, guided reading, word walls, pictorials, graphic organizers, technology and the use of manipulatives. Additionally, as observed during classroom visits, students can access charts from previous tasks. In most classes we visited, students worked in partnerships using a turn and talk strategy. In some classes students discussed a task during a mini-lesson when they were prompted by teacher questions. Furthermore, although teachers engage students in discussions by asking probing questions, the use of strategic scaffolds or extensions varies across classrooms. In one class, for example, a teacher encouraged the students to discuss their opinions by asking students to work in small groups to discuss if dodge ball should be banned for students safety. In another class, a teacher directed the students during a mini-lesson to turn and talk to a partner about different types of energy. Teachers' attempts to raise the level of student participation in discussions are sometimes limited to a turn and talk strategy scheduled mostly in mini-lessons, thus limiting opportunities for all learners to extend independent thinking beyond teacher directed questions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Isaac Remsen Elementary PS 147	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