

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 156 Waverly

Elementary School K156

**104 Sutter Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Beverly Logan

Dates of review: December 12 – 13, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 156 Waverly is an elementary school with 774 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 79% Black, 19% Hispanic and less than 2% other students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support the school's goals in meeting students' learning needs. (1.3)
 - The school prioritizes funds to purchase new research-based programs such as Triumphs Reading Intervention Program for the Special Needs population, Rigor 3 for English language learners and Singapore Math for grades K to 1 in support of the school's instructional goals. Teachers indicate that the programs motivate students and aid in skill development, which has led to incremental growth on school-based assessments. In addition, there has been an increase in independent reading stamina documented in student data portfolios, since September of this year.
 - Teachers meet in collaborative teams twice a week. Key staff members have been identified as lead facilitators and work closely with school administrators and the Teacher Center coach to leverage effective practices across teams. Student data and work samples are analyzed against State standards, and learning goals are examined within the context of developmentally appropriate core content skills. Using the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) as a guide, teachers revise plans and create challenging academic tasks. As a result, teachers articulate the value and application of data analysis to inform student groupings and effective instructional practices. This focus is manifested as teachers dig in to create rigorous targeted tasks as evidenced in the evolution of student work products that demonstrate progress.
- The school provides extensive feedback and support to teachers that result in increased self-evaluation and revision of instructional practices, which is improving teacher competency. (4.1)
 - The school and network partner with the Office of Teacher Effectiveness to pilot onsite professional development for administrators in calibrating observations, norming feedback based on low inference data and noting trends, which drive professional development. Administrators use a monthly observation calendar to schedule informal observations and upload teacher development data into ARIS to enable the tracking of teacher progress. School leaders use the outcome of short, frequent observations to design, implement and modify professional development that supports teacher growth and facilitates greater understanding of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teachers state, "No teacher should be alone in their room reinventing the wheel". Since September, the school administration and a Talent Coach, support teachers with skills needed to design coherent instructional tasks that challenge and engage students in the development of critical thinking skills and the use of higher order questions while promoting a setting where students feel safe. Teachers with evidence of strong practice have been identified as instructional leads and serve to build capacity among the ranks through their role on grade and inquiry teams. The observation of teacher practice also provides clear evidence to support principal

recommendations as part of the teacher tenure framework. As a result, there has been a positive shift in classroom practice as noted in increased use of effective questioning that encourages greater student engagement in classroom discussions and refined student work products, as well as strong support for teacher development efforts.

- A cohesive assessment process ensures that teachers know their individual students' needs, strengths and learning styles across content areas and make adjustments as needed to support targeted instruction. (2.2)
 - All teachers engage in structured professional collaborations in grade team meetings to create and administer common assessments. They meet regularly to discuss students' strengths and weaknesses and “norm” their practice against State standards. Common rubrics, benchmark and unit assessments, are used to analyze student work and lead to the discovery of concepts and skills where mastery has not been achieved. Teachers share formative assessment data to inform planning and then target instruction to meet the unique needs of students. This reciprocal structure, monitored by school leaders who participate in team meetings, enables teachers to adjust action plans for cohorts of students to improve outcomes. These strategies have led to all sub-groups achieving the 75th growth percentile on New York State assessments and incremental improvement on ongoing school based formative benchmark data.
- The school aligns curricula to State standards and includes opportunities for students to engage in a variety of challenging learning experiences, including the Arts, with resources to support increased learning outcomes. (1.1)
 - Core curricula, aligned to State standards, for a range of students of varying ability levels are strategically chosen and include a yearly Arts calendar. Literacy units of study that integrate with grade level themes and various strands in the Arts are purposefully adapted across grades. Math in Focus and project-based experiences across the curriculum include English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, so teachers and students engage in meaningful and creative learning experiences during the school day and/or afterschool. This work provides students with an interdisciplinary approach to problem solving, teamwork, and effective communication that serves to promote engagement and high levels of thinking. Teachers work collaboratively with support from network staff to revise units of study, integrate the CCLS expectations and align unit tasks to the school's key standards. As a result, there is a school-wide focus on higher-order thinking skills across content areas that influence the questions posed by teachers and a pervasive emphasis on pushing student thinking to ensure academic gains as reflected in classrooms across the school for most students.

What the school needs to improve

- Further refine teaching practices and tasks so that students, particularly high achievers, are appropriately challenged in learning activities to extend their thinking. (1.2)
 - Staff express the belief that peer-discussions, along with questions that encourage critical thinking and data-informed groupings, guide their

teaching to improve student outcomes. They work in grade teams to develop strategies that are embedded in units of study to support most learners. In addition, across the school there is a focus on meeting the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. Many tasks are designed to challenge students' ability to engage in higher order processes such as inference or synthesizing. For example, the first grade team, during their grade level inquiry team meeting, focused on helping students become better writers, examined samples of student work and discussed the refinement of instructional strategies, such as graphic organizers and writing prompts, to help subgroups of students such as ELLs, master core concepts around targeted skill sets. The school has also positioned teachers, through extensive professional development options, to use the Depth of Knowledge matrix to frame questions at various levels to promote higher order thinking skills. Differentiated supports are planned to give each student access to learning objectives. This is demonstrated in the consistent differentiation of small group instruction, design of learning tasks and student work products, as observed during classroom visits that provide most students with opportunities to practice and apply their learning. However, while the school is refining its instructional practices to support most students, it has not yet shifted its focus to strategically extend rigorous tasks in the curricula so that it offers more challenging activities for students at or above grade level proficiency in meeting State standards. Therefore, not all students are appropriately pushed to the highest level possible.

- Build on the emerging social protocols within the school to ensure a school culture that result in increased outcomes for children. (1.4)
 - A general tone of respect permeates the school. In response to feedback on the most recent School Survey in which teachers indicate concerns related to order and discipline, the principal has worked to improve behavioral issues. The school's counseling team provides support to students with repeated incidents of challenging behaviors and who are academically and socially at risk, as evidenced in incident reports and performance data. In addition, the principal recently set up a student council to provide a forum for student voice and is in the process of scheduling monthly meetings. Teachers report that these efforts have resulted in an improvement in school tone and state, "5th grade is calmer this year". While the school has improved the social climate, more support is needed to ensure systemic changes that include targeted supports and on demand interventions with support staff.
 - The school is developing support structures and action plans specifically in guidance, which include concentrated efforts on the part of the pupil personnel committee and special education intervention team. Team strategies that include giving students space during crisis, as opposed to confronting them and developing cues between teachers and students that allow for exits to time-out venues when needed, have reduced the number of classroom incidents. However, these good practices for de-escalating potential crises are not shared across the school to ensure alignment with the work of inquiry teams and to support the nurturing of academic progress. As a result, the majority of students do not benefit from these accommodations that foster academic and social-emotional growth.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 156 Waverly	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