

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Ida Posner

K165

**76 Lott Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Fran Ellers

**Dates of review: June 3-4, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Leslie Miller Chislett**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 165 is a Pre-K-8 school with 538 students from pre-kindergarten through grade eight. The school population comprises 86% Black, 10% Hispanic, 2% White, % Asian students, and 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 25% 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 89.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers observe classroom instruction and provide feedback on teaching using a research-based rubric to support professional growth and reflection and elevate practice. 4.1
 - The principal and assistant principals conduct cycles of frequent observations so that each teacher experiences six informal and four formal observations. During informal observations, feedback is presented to teachers both verbally and in writing on a *Classroom Visitation Tool* template that includes low inference evidence that highlights strengths, growth areas and time-bound action steps. The templates vary and recommendations are aligned to prioritized competencies on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. A follow-up checklist with clear expectations for the classroom environment and lesson plans is also used to provide additional feedback. Evaluative ratings are given following a formal observation in a summary narrative. One set of documented feedback examined the quality of the questions a teacher posed to students and recommended that her next steps incorporate escalating open-ended questions in her lesson plan to elevate cognitive rigor and enhance student participation and discussion. Follow-up visits within the next two to four weeks were scheduled on the template. At various points in the year, teachers set goals and reflect on their growth in light of the competencies for effective practice. Consequently, the observation of classroom teaching, accompanied by research-based feedback is producing teacher growth along a developmental continuum.
 - Through a review of observation data, leaders identify professional learning trends and needs. For example, establishing a culture for learning that enhances student engagement was selected as a school-wide instructional focus for the fall. Throughout the year other competencies were emphasized and the mission for teacher effectiveness was articulated as *Triple E - engagement, enhancement and enlightening-, a program for teacher support*. This involves all supervisors, teachers and paraprofessionals in weekly peer observations on a rotation schedule to provide feedback based upon the Danielson framework. Peers take low inference notes as they observe their colleague's lesson and then debrief findings making low-stakes suggestions for enhancing professional practice. Additional professional development on research-based strategies is provided through targeted pairing of staff members, faculty conferences and coaching with lead teachers based on the trends gleaned from classroom observation data, to support teacher development. This data also informs the administration in making teacher assignments and tenure decisions. As a result, adult learning is focused and pedagogy is being elevated in light of research based practices and the instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), as evidenced in observation reports and targeted professional development.
- Teachers engage in inquiry and professional collaborations to promote school goals, the CCLS and instructional shifts, resulting in improved learning for adults and students. 4.2
 - At least once weekly, during scheduled time in the school day or after school by choice, all teachers, pre-k-8, meet in teams to assess student performance on learning tasks, refine curriculum maps and units or lesson plans accordingly, through the process of looking at student work. The principal explains this work as "re-calibrating" curriculum and instruction to the CCLS and Danielson framework. Inquiry and professional collaboration has promoted the school's goals to develop rigorous, CCLS-aligned

curricula and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers as evidenced by teacher's attention to standards alignment and improving student learning. For example, the self-facilitated third grade team followed an *inquiry cycle support* protocol while examining targeted level 2 and 3 students' multi-step math problem solving strategies for successes, weaknesses and gaps in understanding. They identified an instructional focus and adjustment in teaching and made use of a CCLS i-Phone app to confirm what learning objective should be re-taught. Another example of collaborative inquiry work was observed in the fourth grade team, who in keeping with the CCLS, worked to incorporate non-fiction texts in a social studies unit on multiple revolutions. Furthermore, documentation from middle school science and social studies teachers' shows revisions to unit plans to incorporate more culminating projects requiring research, reading and text based writing. Teachers explain that through inquiry they were able to generate helpful strategies to build entry points for visual or hands-on learners in their lessons and chunk content for students with disabilities. The return on structured professional collaboration has been improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for grade level groups, struggling learners and students with disabilities, as indicated by teacher observations and formative assessments aligned with targeted learning standards.

- The school uses common assessments, rubrics and performance tasks to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level and provide feedback on learning resulting in progress for students. 2.2
 - Teachers, grade level teams and administrators analyze baseline and benchmark assessments aligned to Common Core and key standards in math and literacy from Acuity, Teachers College Reading Writing Project grade level end of unit tests and other performance tasks. Evaluative rubrics are visible on student work displayed in the hallways and on classroom walls, such as those supplying criteria for expository and editorial writing or science arguments reasoned from experimentation data. Young learners explain that these rubrics provide feedback to help them and their teachers understand the next steps for learning. Elementary classroom data-binders house assessment information organized to identify readers as “at risk”, “some risk” or “low risk” for meeting grade level benchmark levels, yielding the planning of groups for guided reading support, tutoring and academic interventions. Therefore, the outcome of this use of assessment data, results in teachers' knowledge of their students' needs and data-informed instruction advancing learning.
 - An analysis of the 2011-2012 NYS English language arts (ELA) and Math exams data revealed that fourth graders had out performed other student cohorts. Leadership and faculty attributed this to a CCLS-aligned digital learning curriculum and assessment program called *Success Maker*, adopted that year. The following year implementation was expanded to grades 2-8. The program tailors reading content organized around social studies, science themes and mathematics lessons to a real-time analysis of each learner's performance. With the help of technology, teachers and learners benefit from scaffolded feedback in the form of tutorials triggered when a learner encounters challenges. Working with a *Success Maker* coordinator, individual teachers and teams monitor student progress toward goals in a grade or subject and adjust their lessons according to student *Success Maker* data on weaknesses and strengths. One major insight from these common assessments has been that student reading stamina needs to increase and be explicitly addressed in teaching. Assessment data also informs teacher team intervention planning and Saturday school support. The impact has been the timely analysis of student learning to guide teaching. Also, formative assessment information has revealed progress for students in literacy skills, such as citing textual evidence when answering questions, structuring their writing to correspond to its purpose and supporting ideas with vivid details, or elaborating when explaining math solutions.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the work across grades and subjects to align curricula to the CCLS, emphasize the instructional shifts and higher order thinking, so that planning includes ways to engage all learners in higher thinking and rigorous performance tasks. 1.1
 - Schools leaders and teachers state that they make purposeful decisions to organize units of instruction around the CCLS and the city wide literacy and math instructional shifts, such as reading non-fiction text or problem solving in math to deepen conceptual understanding. The school has chosen to create curriculum pacing maps, implement some of city's Common Core-aligned units and utilize guidance to re-arrange the Every Day Math curriculum resources. At times, teachers have made use of the Atlas online curriculum management system to create original unit plans in various disciplines that list what CCLS's are applicable to unit content. However, as currently written, only a few of the literacy units include detailed instructional sequences that build towards rigorous performance tasks requiring students to analyze complex texts in a way consistent with the demands of the CCLS for the grade-level. A typical example is a fourth grade unit on the Revolutionary War in New York State that includes a culminating task that requires students to write a speech about a person's heroic deeds. But, there is no standards-aligned requirement in the task prompt to supply key details or to integrate information from several texts within the grade-level complexity band to support a point of view in alignment with the CCLS. Some units refer to writing rubrics and incorporate more challenging tasks such as report writing in the first grade. While 2012-13 English language arts curriculum maps provided options for special education and English language learners, instructional supports and extensions for these students were more generic in some written units. For example, under differentiation strategies, one unit lists the Universal Design website as a reference, and another mentions "leveled class and homework and auditory, visual and kinesthetic opportunities". Consequently, there is a lack of alignment with the rigor in the standards and a lack of detailed planning to engage diverse learners, which does not support the potential to close the achievement gap for all learners.
- Build consistency across classrooms in the use of instructional strategies that provide multiple entry points so that all students can access challenging tasks and demonstrate higher levels of participation and thinking. 1.2
 - Across classrooms teaching practices are becoming aligned to the belief that student engagement is dependent on classroom culture and vital to learning. Through the faculty's collaborative use of the Danielson framework, a common language about researched-based, effective pedagogy, like planning coherent and explicit instruction, questioning and discussion techniques to engage students and assessment is emerging. However, while specific practices related to these domains are being tried out, high levels of student participation and thinking were inconsistently evidenced in visits to classrooms and in student work. For example, most teachers used group work, but did not provide a clear rationale for how or why the students were placed together, nor provided challenging learning activities. Specifically, several teachers assigned roles and had some group members collaboratively read different portions of an article and some do note-taking. However, this differentiated activity did not offer all students' the opportunity to interact with and comprehend complex text. In one middle school self-contained class for students with disabilities, students read a portion of the book; House on Mango Street and they generated their own

questions about the chapter. Listed on the board were literal questions about the characters. In the class discussion, they were asked how the main character felt about living there. A few shared their ideas. Students were never instructed to read further and answer their questions; support ideas with text and there was no reinforcement of central ideas. Instead, for a follow-up assignment students were asked to write about their own neighborhood, an assignment that was not text-dependent. In contrast to this, in a seventh grade social studies class, students were asked to summarize information from multiple texts and formulate claims about heroes, villains and conquests about Spanish Conquistadors from their reading. The learning task and teacher's questions required students to discuss reasons and make use of the text in their responses. In a math classroom, students examined the shape of the data to interpret statistics in a fast paced lesson that required them to consider various interpretations. Yet, in this classroom and others, questioning typically volleyed between the teacher and called-upon students. In some classrooms, teachers answered questions, but did not engage other students in sharing their thoughts. As a consequence of pedagogy not being fully aligned to the framework for effective practice and the instructional shifts of the CCLS, levels of student participation and cognitive engagement are not consistently high across classes, thus limiting students' academic growth.

- Strengthen professional development, parent outreach, student services and social emotional learning, to result in a coherent approach that fosters student academic and personal behaviors aligned to college and career readiness. 1.4
 - The school is in the process of developing a culture that ensures success and promotes college and career readiness. School leadership recognizes that structures need to be strengthened to address areas of inconsistency, such as low attendance and social and emotional learning. Based on the historically low attendance data from 2011-12, a new attendance committee was formed to monitor attendance and strategize ways to shift current attendance patterns and to educate parents on the correlation between attendance, parent involvement and student success in school. To reduce the number of suspensions and escalated disciplinary cases, the school provided time for classroom teachers to engage in inter-visitations for professional learning around effective classroom management, for all students to come together under the direction of the dean to participate in a newly formed *Respect for All* program that emphasizes pro-social behaviors, such as soft play versus rough play or anti-bullying for all students. Leadership skills for middle school students are taught through a complimentary program. In interviews with the support staff, including the psychologist, part-time social worker, special education coordinator, counselor and dean it was evident that goals for the development of personal and academic behaviors and impact of these initiatives and how they fit with the schools' vision for the development of social and emotional wellness are still being solidified. While the school leverages numerous partnerships for academic support, it utilizes just a few for social and emotional learning needs, like the Brownsville Recreational Center. For issues requiring a more intense response, the school engages Brookdale Hospital and New York City Psycho Therapy. Currently, referrals and anecdotal information related to behavioral support and counseling needs for students who are "at risk" are messaged from teachers to parents and to the social work and psychologist, but the process is loosely articulated. Parents, students and teachers express a belief that students are nurtured both academically and socially. However, the absence of clear goals, well-coordinated communication structures and fully developed learning experiences for supporting students'

social and emotional development currently limits students' growth in effective personal and academic behaviors aligned with college and career readiness.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Ida Posner	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