

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Newport School

Elementary School 184

**274 Newport Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Lamson Lam

**Dates of review: March 6 - 7, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Newport School is an elementary school with 523 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 76% Black, 22% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 11% 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 88.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal effectively uses key resources and organizes teacher assignments in ways that promote the achievement of school goals, support professional collaboration, and strengthen instructional capacity. (1.3)
 - Teachers' schedules are organized to provide time for them to meet twice a week during the school day, once on grade level teams and once with content area colleagues. Instructional lead teachers additionally facilitate inquiry meetings every Monday afternoon, which focus on analysis of data and student work in relation to how students are progressing towards school wide goals. Teachers use information to discuss implications for their classrooms and develop or refine instructional plans to meet students' needs. The prioritizing of teacher meeting time is further supported by the allocation of resources to support teacher participation in after school professional development that builds teacher expertise around the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the development of standards based rubrics. This structured time has also encouraged staff to meet informally during lunch, and before and after school, to discuss students, lessons, and curriculum. Teachers reflected that they are appreciative of the improved professional culture and the sharing of expertise with colleagues. As a result, instructional capacity across the school is strengthened, and curriculum and instruction have been refined to support student progress.
 - The principal has developed a committee including teachers, administrators, instructional leads, the union representative, the middle school coordinator, and the parent coordinator, for the recruitment, hiring, and retention of new staff. Interviews that are focused on four areas of expertise: instruction, strategies for differentiation, professional collaboration and dedication to the community, have resulted in the addition of nine new staff members, over the last two years, who have demonstrated their effectiveness as evidenced by observation data, and who have contributed to progress towards the schools goals of improved teacher practice and an engaging learning environment that meets the needs of diverse learners. Several new teachers stated that they are well supported and valued by the administration and colleagues.
- Administrators provide meaningful feedback to teachers which is aligned to a research based teaching framework and results in reflective teacher practice and improved pedagogy.(4.1)
 - Administrators and teachers were introduced to the Danielson Framework for teaching during the 2010-2011 school year and focused their work on the six priority areas established by Citywide Instructional Expectations. During the current year, the deep focus on competencies for Designing Coherent Instruction, Questioning and Discussion Techniques and Using Assessment for instruction has improved the ability of administrators to objectively assess teaching and learning. Additionally there is a shared language amongst teachers around the development of effective pedagogical practice. Formal and informal observation reports reflect feedback around the focused competencies and especially in the area of

questioning strategies. Administrators use the research-based framework to set goals for teachers and assess classroom lessons. Short, frequent observations capture teacher strengths and needs, provide information that results in meaningful and timely written and verbal feedback to teachers, allows administrators and instructional leads to identify targeted areas for support of teacher development with professional development and coaching, and enables teachers to make adjustments to practice to meet students' learning needs. Teachers stated the feedback has influenced the way they plan for facilitation of discussions by now including higher order questions in their lessons, thus improving the quality of the learning environment and increasing student engagement.

- Teachers meet regularly on grade level and content area teams to collaboratively analyze data and student work and make key decisions about instructional strategies that improve student achievement.(4.2)
 - In weekly, grade level team meetings, teachers review and analyze summative and classroom level data and look at student work to determine strengths and areas of need. One team for example, in discussing the results of math Acuity data focused on identifying whether students failed to answer questions correctly due to a deficit in the math skill which required comparing fractions and decimals and determining greater or lesser values. Teachers then decided on how to address the language of the assessment and the possible instructional strategies needed to support student improvement in this area. Another team discussed a recent project, which generated a lot of student interest in research of different countries and cultures. The teachers discussed possible ways of increasing the rigor of the project and how to better align the steps in the project to the expectations of the CCLS. This teamwork has changed how teachers are working across the school and results in instructional adjustments to address students' needs. The lead teacher from each grade also meets with other grade level leads to share their work and discuss implications for vertical planning of instruction. Over the past two years, the focus on shared responsibility and increased opportunities for teachers to review student progress has contributed to an increased number of students meeting standards on both English language arts and math assessments.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that, across grades and subject areas, units of study and academic tasks reflect support for diverse learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities and result in cognitively engaging student work. (1.1)
 - The school utilizes curriculum maps, which delineate themes, essential questions, concepts, and skills for each grade in English language arts and math. The maps also include pacing of oral language, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness in the lower grades. For the middle school, literacy maps include genre studies and strategies for incorporating a variety of texts into the balanced literacy workshop components. The units of study are paced for each month and aligned to appropriate CCLS. Teachers' lessons in all subjects reflect learning targets and activities relative to the instructional shifts, such as the demand that students provide textual evidence and rationale for their responses. The

conversations on teacher teams reflect teachers' increasing understanding of the need to design tasks that are rigorous for all learners including higher achieving students. The level of rigor in tasks, however, is inconsistent across lessons and does not always provide necessary scaffolds for English language learners or students with disabilities. Additionally, students who achieve at higher levels are engaged in tasks designed for all students, and thus do not allow for their acceleration of learning. Thus, despite teachers' good attempts in some lessons to raise rigor and promote higher order thinking, the curriculum does not yet address the needs of specific subgroups of students and hinders their progress.

- Enhance instructional practices across the school to consistently provide multiple entry points for diverse students so that lessons are appropriately challenging, including tasks and discussions that promote higher order thinking. (1.2)
 - Across grades and subjects there is evidence of teacher use of questioning strategies, aligned to the teaching framework and the expectations of the CCLS, that increase student engagement and participation. Although the level of questions varies across classrooms, in many lessons teachers use appropriate wait time after asking questions, implementing school wide strategies that have been a focus of professional development. There is evidence in upper and lower grades, in both math and literacy lessons, that teacher wait five to seven seconds before selecting a student to respond. They also use the "Poll the Room" (thumbs up/down) to assess understanding and agreement, and the "Call on Three" method, which allows at least three students to answer before the teacher indicates whether they are correct. Teachers in some classes, as the eighth grade English language arts and math classrooms, are becoming more adept at facilitating discussions. This was evidenced in student use of accountable talk prompts, such as, "I agree/disagree with" and "I would like to add to what he/she said", ensuring responsibility for peer contributions, and increasing student ownership for their learning and answers. However, in most lessons across the school, there is little evidence of specific scaffolds for English language learners and struggling readers, thus limiting the opportunities for relevant sub-groups of students to demonstrate their thinking or engage in higher-level discussions.
- Improve the alignment and use of assessment practices across grades and content areas so that adjustments to instruction are timely and feedback to students effectively meets identified learning needs.(2.2)
 - Teachers are developing in their use of common assessments to identify strengths and areas of need across groups of students, grades, and content areas, and to make necessary revisions to instructional planning. In addition to weekly and monthly assessments including Acuity benchmarks, teachers also use rubrics that are somewhat aligned to the expectations of the CCLS. Teachers indicate that they utilize information from the rubric scores to determine students' next learning steps and to adjust instruction as needed for groups of students as well as for individual students. Many teachers use generic rubrics and others collaborate to develop task specific rubrics that enable them to assess the elements of written work, problem solving in math, and writing in a variety

of genres, therefore beginning to increase coherence across grades. Some students state that the use of rubrics helps them to see “what they did right and what they need to work on” while others state they receive the rubric score with little information or next steps. Most rubrics include points and descriptions of the elements of the work being assessed. However, there are still inconsistencies in how students use rubrics to self-assess. In some lessons students use the rubric as a checklist, but most students receive the rubric after the completion of their work with some comments from the teacher. Additionally, some rubrics are not in student friendly language, vary in score ranges from 4-point to 9-point rubrics and are not always shared with students prior to the task or assignment. The feedback written on student work is not always discussed with students. Thus, the uneven use of rubrics as an assessment limits teacher and student capacity to target next steps or support the advancement of student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 184 Newport	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