

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 221 Toussaint L'Ouverture

Elementary 17K221

**791 EMPIRE BOULEVARD
BROOKLYN
NY, 11213**

Principal: Clara Moodie-Kirkland

Dates of review: February 4-5, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Maria Robustelli

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 221 Toussaint L'Ouverture is an Elementary school with 588 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 89% Black, 8% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 15% 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 91.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

What the school does well

- The school leader makes strategic organizational decisions that lead to student achievement and personal growth. (1.3)
 - Despite budget limitations, students benefit from grants and partnerships within the community that are aligned to and support the school-wide goals, including character building supports for students, such as ballroom dancing, Urban Voices, Music on the Brain as well as celebrations of student work. In addition, students have written and been awarded grants from larger corporations, such as Whole Foods to provide materials for classroom learning experiences. The school has also obtained grants that provide access to activities, such as soccer and Walk/Run programs that promote healthy living and environmental education. As a result, students' learning experiences are enriched providing opportunities to apply what they have learned in the classroom setting and grow both as students and future leaders. These initiatives are optimizing learning opportunities and extending the academic program for all learners in the school.
 - Teachers' schedules are structured to provide time to meet two times per week for collaborative grade level planning and school wide inquiry. The team meetings are focused on the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the analysis of student work products and assessment results. As evidenced during teacher team meetings, teachers make modifications to CCLS aligned units in order to improve instruction and engage students in challenging academic tasks. For example, modifications to a Garden Plan Project to provided opportunities for real world problems and additional informational text to support students in creating boxes to plant and grow seeds to create a garden. This work has deepened teachers' understanding of the CCLS and they have further aligned lessons, units of study, instructional tasks and curriculum to meet the standards. Based on student work samples, classroom observations and documentation of CCLS unit results, teachers demonstrate many improvements in their practice of increased rigor in academic tasks, as evidenced by changes in the curriculum maps and increased alignment with the expectations of the new standards.
- The nurturing school culture provides a safe and respectful environment where students develop academically and personally. (1.4)
 - The school maintains a whole child approach to learning that supports the social-emotional needs of students to support academic success and achieve school-wide goals. Clear expectations through the implementation of structures such as a "caught being good" program that recognizes good deeds like returning valuable items that have been found. These outstanding behaviors are recognized with a "shout out" and students report that the program helps them make positive choices throughout the day and they value helping others. The morning also begins with a daily pledge recited by students on the loud speaker and a moment of silence for students to think about the day and one thing they can do better to achieve their academic and behavioral goals, such as using kind words with each other. Parents and students also report that administration, teachers and the guidance counselor quickly resolve any

problems or concerns and teachers are always available and approachable. Student feedback has led to the implementation and success of the school recycling program and Hip2B Healthy market. Students reported feeling their voice is welcomed by administration and has impacted on creating these school-wide programs. Attendance is currently 2% higher than the district average at 92% demonstrating a 1% increase from last year and behavioral incidents at the school are minimal. As a result, the school has created an environment where students feel valued and respected and look forward to coming to school.

- The school utilizes internal structures and external partnerships that support the school's vision centered on the health and wellness of all students, including a partnership with Seeds in the Middle. This has resulted in a school wide focus on the improved physical health of students through sports such as soccer, hands-on culinary classes such as Chef's Night where professional chefs work with parents and students to educate and prepare nutritional, low-fat dishes with ingredients purchased in neighborhood stores and at the in house Hip 2B Healthy market where students, with adult support, sell nutritious organic snacks and fresh produce. Families willingly participate in these activities to reinforce school practices. Teachers also receive professional development to embed lessons and activities into CCLS units of study to ensure students use real world application to solve problems that develop math, literacy, science and social studies skills. For example, students worked in collaboration with Home Depot to build plant boxes, calculate the optimal number of seeds to plant in boxes, take care of growing crops and eventually cook the food they grow. Students also operate the Hip 2B Healthy market where they develop their business skills, including advertising and marketing. As a result, students and families have learned positive behaviors for better health and quality of life that support academic learning.
- School leadership uses observation data to elevate teacher practice through effective feedback and targeted professional development that ensures professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
 - The school has adopted Charlotte Danielson's framework for teaching as a tool to identify effective teaching practices and next learning steps for teachers. School leaders engage in three cycles of observation focused around the identified competencies of lesson planning and questioning. Administration uses the teaching framework rubric, samples of student work from unit tasks and teacher goals to provide feedback to teachers that accurately captures strengths, challenges and next steps. Teachers shared that the collaborative dialogue with administrators and professional development to support improvements, provided helpful feedback and actionable suggestions for their personal growth. In one example, teacher feedback focused attention on developing lessons to include more real world application of skills for students. On the day of the review, the teacher's classroom lesson and written lesson plan addressed the focus on this next step as students were asked to use area to determine the quantity of materials needed for a home improvement project, thus demonstrating professional growth.
 - Professional development plans created in collaboration with staff help provide support in identified areas of need. For example, during the initial cycle of observations, the administration observed that teacher planning lacked thoughtful construction. Teachers worked with administration to identify key components of an effective lesson. Professional development opportunities were planned to provide a deeper understanding of designing coherent instruction. Across classrooms, teachers are now using structured

plans that contain specific components, including links to standards, essential questions and learning objectives. Based on observations, this has led to consistency across classrooms as well as a thoughtful link between planned activities and lesson goals and objectives. Individual teachers develop three goals aligned to the competencies within the teaching framework based on initial classroom observations and discussions with administration. The principal monitors teacher goals and measures growth within the rubric throughout the year and provides targeted support as needed through classroom intervisitations, Lunch and Learn opportunities and workshops. Based on written feedback as well as classroom observations, this focused work continues to build instructional capacity around school wide priorities and ensures teacher's reach their personal goals, achieve school-wide goals and support student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure implementation of rigorous academic tasks across classrooms that emphasize higher order skills to promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school has aligned curriculum maps and pacing calendars to State standards and integrated Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) units of study. CCLS units have been modified based on student data to address the school wide focus on writing. However, academic tasks that promote rigorous habits and deep levels of understanding were not consistently observed across classrooms. For example, during a second grade lesson, the learning objective was “Children will subtract within 1000 using different strategies.” Students were asked to review the strategies on a poster, including “We can use a number grid.” and “We can use counting up.” by reading aloud as a whole group and were instructed to use one of these strategies to solve the assigned problem. In a fifth grade classroom, students were engaged in small groups responding to open-ended, text-based questions that ranged from gauging literal comprehension of text to higher-level thinking, including, “What was the turning point in the passage for Malcolm X?” and “What evidence in the text passage supports this claim?” As a result, all students, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs), are not provided with cognitively engaging, rigorous tasks across classrooms or grade levels resulting in limited progress in students as they prepare for college and career readiness.
- Deepen questioning and discussion techniques across classrooms in order to increase the level of student work products and promote higher level of student thinking. (1.2)
 - Teaching practices across classrooms are aligned to curricula and students are highly motivated to learn. However, during classroom visits, instructional strategies, including questioning and discussion techniques, inconsistently challenged and engaged students. In most classrooms, although teachers used data from reading levels and pre- and post-assessments to create groupings, instruction remained teacher-centered and focused on whole group instruction. As a result, minimal opportunities are provided for collaboration amongst students to develop their critical thinking skills. In some classrooms, teachers respond to the learning needs of individual students and effectively use data to integrate varied levels of support, such as scaffolded vocabulary, peer groupings, graphic organizers and leveled texts. Some also provided opportunities for student discussions in small groups related to the similarities and differences in their thinking. As a result, not all students are able to

maximize their progress by being challenged consistently to demonstrate higher order thinking skills.

- Across most classrooms, student work products and discussions lacked deep levels of student thinking and participation. For example, the majority of work displayed on bulletin boards and contained in student work portfolios included math basic fact quizzes, spelling tests and worksheets that required students to recall information. During observations, in some classrooms, teachers facilitated discussions by engaging students in high levels of participation through prompts and higher order questions while others inconsistently pushed student thinking. As a result, these varied levels of practice create missed opportunities for students to produce meaningful work that reflect deep levels of participation and student thinking.
- Continue to develop practices to analyze a variety of data to provide meaningful information regarding student progress in order to promote higher levels of achievement. (2.2)
 - Teachers across grades use a variety of data, including pre-, mid- and post- unit assessments, informal observations and Acuity assessments that are aligned with CCLS to gauge individual student progress toward school-wide goals focused on writing. Additionally, teachers utilize rubrics to assess student work and understanding. However, in some grades, teachers do not utilize assessments and rubrics to identify overall student trends within their classrooms. For example, during the third grade team meeting, teachers used instructional targets to focus their overall discussions around student work, but strategies for instruction were broadly based on current classroom practice and not focused on the individual analysis of student work to surface gaps to effectively improve learning outcomes. As a result, this limits the ability of teachers to identify best practices in order to strengthen strategies and support targeted instruction across grades and content areas and ensure higher levels of achievement.
 - Although the majority of teachers engage in structured professional learning team work on a weekly basis, this process is developing across teams. Grade level teams utilize a protocol to help analyze student work. However, most teams are at the beginning stages of using these protocols and the information the process yields to measure progress towards grade level goals, or to modify curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all learners. This inhibits individual and teams of teachers from identifying student strengths and areas of need and making the needed adjustments to curriculum and instruction in order to ensure student progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 221 Toussaint L'Ouverture	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