

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Hale A. Woodruff Elementary School

Elementary School K224

757 Wortman Avenue

Brooklyn

NY 11208

Principal: George Andrews

Dates of review: March 14-15, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Joyce Stallings-Harte

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 224 is an elementary school with 855 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 74% Black, 24% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

The school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teacher assessment practices are aligned to curricula that target student understanding and guide instructional modifications to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teachers use rubrics linked to instructional programs to assess students' writing skills and record results on tracking sheets that note student progress. A review of the English language arts State tests, identified inferencing as an area in need of improvement and teachers adjusted instructional practices to include work on context clues and vocabulary development in alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teachers post weekly spelling words on word walls in classrooms and begin literacy lessons with introductions to new vocabulary students need to know in order to read and comprehend the passages. Students are assessed on a regular basis, and feedback connected to the assessment rubrics guides their improvements. As a result, the school refines practice and incorporates more vocabulary work and context clues into daily lessons and students are able to increase performance as measured by teacher-made rubrics.
 - Teachers utilize multiple assessments during the school year to monitor and measure student reading abilities. Teachers administer Fountas and Pinnell running records formally, three times a year and more frequently as needed to ensure students are making progress. From this reading assessment, guided reading groups are formed. Results of the Grade 2 running record administration indicate that 9% of students moved up 1 level, 35% moved up 2 levels, 41% moved up 3 or more levels with an overall 85% moving up a minimum of 1 level. Teachers administer pre- and post-assessments for each unit of the anthology-based literacy programs and use the assessments to inform instruction, thereby increasing student performance.
- Purposeful organizational decisions regarding technology and staffing align with school wide goals and leverage student growth (1.3)
 - The principal is committed to ensuring students have access to technology. All classrooms are outfitted with Smart Boards which teachers use with Envisions, their selected math program. Teachers report that their students are more engaged in lessons because of the visual appeal and because students can interact and show their work directly on the board. The school has a full computer lab with a dedicated technology teacher who augments the computer based literacy program, Waterford, for 1st grade, which is being piloted for literacy, ST Math program, for 4th and 5th grades and Award Reading all of which provide digital intervention options for students. Laptops are available for all classes. The school is transitioning to Datacation, which will offer online tools to help the school evaluate student data to inform and support instruction, design professional development, curriculum planning and

support accountability for student achievement. The school monitors student progress toward grade level and student goals with a web-based program called Class Level Reports that has shown steady increases in performance. As a result, student work products show evidence of increased use of vocabulary in all content areas, attending to one of the school wide goals. Additionally, teachers are able to make instructional adjustments based on the results of the computer-based assessments, thus increasing student engagement and performance.

- Based on a review of the latest 3rd through 6th grade English language arts and math scores on New York State exams, the principal revised teacher assignments based on teacher strengths and student needs. Teachers, in the department of special education move to the next grade with their students so that the supportive relationships built spans at least two years. For example, because teachers knew what instructional strategy worked for a group of students, teachers were able to suggest the use of more manipulatives to solve multi-step math problems to assist students. Data from observations and ongoing assessments indicate that some students are making progress toward their learning targets. As a result of this careful matching of teacher strengths to student needs, there is increased opportunity for student academic growth.
- The curriculum promotes rigor and higher order skills that require all students to engage in cognitively demanding tasks. (1.1)
 - Teacher teams and administration align literacy, math and all content areas to the Common Core Learning Standards including the Citywide instructional shifts. Strong emphasis is placed on ensuring meeting time for teachers to plan units that address student needs and include rich writing tasks that incorporate revisions to curriculum based on The New York City Progress Report and English language arts and math State tests. The school's identified needs are to develop students' ability to draw conclusions and make inferences from complex text and vocabulary development to support reading comprehension skills across content. Student writing reflects this application via literary, informational, opinion writing and content area writing. Observation of a 5th grade class noted students reading complex text and diverse learners working with the teacher in a small group and viewing a video and to see how prepositional phrases may be used to connect ideas and used as a tool to enrich writing. Student writing portfolios indicate students use rubrics that measure writing conventions and integration of textual evidence to produce clear, coherent writing pieces. Review of a 5th grade fraction math performance task required students to use mathematical terminology and notation to discuss and describe work using a viable argument in a clear and concise manner. Opportunities for teachers to review and discuss, question assumptions are provided in order to present students with rigorous and challenging learning opportunities. Tasks are designed to engage diverse learners resulting in gains in English language arts and math to close the achievement gap for English language learners and students with disabilities according to the most recent state data and also show an increase in performance as measured on the writing performance tasks.

- School leaders monitor teacher development and provide actionable feedback to promote professional growth and improve teacher practice. (4.1)
 - School leaders conduct short-cycles of observations connected to a research-based framework that focus on the stated citywide competencies of designing coherent instruction, questioning and discussion and assessment, and teachers self-assess using the ARIS Learn platform. Teachers draft short- and long-term goals that are connected to these competencies. Written reports reveal that teachers receive feedback and have follow-up conversations with supervisors that focus on the learning environment and academic performance of students. Teachers state they feel supported through this process. School leaders make constructive comments in their feedback, noting strengths and areas for improvement as well as next steps to guide their progress. One written observation captured evidence of the teacher asking questions of students at level 2 on the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix and noted that the next step was to add higher level (DOK) questions and to increase the level of questions posed by students. As a result of this observation process, expectations for instruction are made clear, teacher development is supported across the school and over 60% of teachers are now rated effective as compared to the first cycle of observation.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine pedagogical practices to meet the learning needs of all students so that work products demonstrate high levels engagement and thinking to improve student performance. (1.2)
 - Some teaching practices incorporate instruction that allows for students to engage in learning opportunities that foster creative and deep thinking. For example, students in a 2nd grade class were asked to identify the difference between a fact and an opinion, offering examples to a partner. Afterwards, all students were sent off to read the same passage in an anthology. In another 2nd grade classroom students were asked to tell the difference between fact and fiction and tell a fact about themselves to a partner. Conversely, displayed work in one 2nd grade classroom evidenced student-to student discussion in comparing and contrasting two characters from a text, and craft written letters to show individual voice. In another 2nd grade classroom, student informational writing work showed the use of a graphic organizer but the information recorded was the same from student to student. In one class, the teacher provided a glossary and manipulatives to support students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) while in another class the teacher only expected SWDs and ELLs to answer lower level questions. In contrast, in a 3rd grade classroom, students were grouped for a math activity and while given varied levels of the math tasks at their level, students were asked to engage in a problem that challenged their thinking. This inconsistency in instruction and lack of high expectations and opportunities for all students to be challenged with complex text hinders potential growth and accelerated achievement for some students.

- Improve the effectiveness of teacher collaboration across the school to strengthen teacher capacity and advance student learning. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams meet weekly and are supported by lead teachers and the literacy and math coaches. The teams are in the process of aligning their practices to the expectations of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and have begun to use a protocol to look at student work and to collect data on student performance and progress. One team utilized a rubric to grade student work, identifying that the task was not rigorous and did not meet the CCLS standards. The team said that they looked at exemplars at the beginning of the school year but they have not yet used them to guide their review of their students' writing products. One lead teacher said that when she implements a strategy she may email it to other teachers but the process for determining the effectiveness of instructional strategies is not embedded or consistent. Although the structures for professional collaboration are in place and the inquiry approach is developing, these inconsistencies limit teacher team capacity to improve practice and move students toward attaining their goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: HALE A. WOODRUFF SCHOOL	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