

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Weeksville School

Elementary School 243

**1580 DEAN STREET
BROOKLYN
NY, 11213**

Principal: KAREN HAMBRIGHT - GLOVE

Dates of review: May 7 - 8, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Weeksville School is an elementary school with 357 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 78% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes decisions based on identified strengths of staff and Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) that support the school's goals for student achievement and improved teacher practice (1.3)
 - The school has endured budgetary constraints and the end of funding sources from grants over the past two years leading to prioritizing the use of resources such as realignment of teacher assignments to support the lowest performing students and targeting professional development to align to school goals. For example, the principal readjusted schedules for cluster teachers to work with small groups of students each morning for reading instruction during an "intervention" period and staggered the beginning of class-based reading instruction so that students could rejoin their classes for core lessons. Cluster teachers were also provided targeted professional development focused on reading strategies and skill development for struggling readers. The principal has also identified particular teachers' strengths to match student needs in an effort to ensure success for students typically referred for behavior interventions. To this end the physical education teacher was moved to a classroom position based on his mentoring and positive influence on students, and has taught an all boy class for the past several years that begins in third grade and follows students until fifth grade. As a result, the initiative has reduced incidents across the school, elevated expectations for student learning and social emotional development and increased student engagement.
- The school's warm and respectful tone provides a safe place for teaching and learning and supports students' social emotional development (1.4)
 - Members of the school community including parents, students, and staff, attest to a "big change" for the better in the school environment with regard to safety and discipline. The principal has made deliberate decisions about expectations for student behavior and teacher response to misconduct. These are clear and understood as stated by parents and students who articulate that there are rewards for positive behaviors and/or consequences for inappropriate actions that include participation in or loss of classroom level privileges respectively, and conferences with parents. In response to students' social emotional and developmental needs, the principal has restructured the child study team as a venue for analyzing student strengths and targeted needs so that teachers and families are able to support all students. The process assists teachers with strategies for meeting student needs within the classroom, whether these are behavioral, emotional, or academic. Teachers feel supported and families state they are included in the conversations about their children's progress. Throughout the school, teachers and students are respectful towards one another, children greet adults and reflect a positive attitude towards being in school. As a result, parents feel their children are safe and students respond to clear behavioral expectations within a culture that supports teaching and learning and where students' needs are known and addressed.
- The leadership's vision for improved student progress is captured in focused goals for school improvement and embraced by stakeholders in a collaborative effort to advance student learning. (3.1)
 - The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan articulates focused goals that respond to State recommendations from a prior review and the Citywide

Instructional Expectations (CIE). Initiatives for improving student achievement and instructional practices across grades are defined in the plan as well as in informational letters to parents and staff. Specific goals include the integration of a research-based framework to support and develop effective pedagogy and increasing the number of students reading at or above grade level. These goals, developed by the principal and school leadership team, are shared with the school community via faculty meetings, parent meetings, and a variety of media including posters and banners and messages on the school website. Parents and teachers state they are aware of school goals. This clear focus has caused shifts in teaching practices and raised expectations for student learning as required by the integration of Common Core Learning Standards. As a result, there is shared commitment from all members of the school community to improve student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that academic tasks and assessments align to the school's curricula and the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards and are designed to meet student needs and engage diverse learners in all classrooms. (1.1)
 - The school's shift from a literacy program that guided teachers' pacing of lessons and assessments to CCLS aligned units of study is in its emerging stages. Although teachers have participated in professional development and are currently implementing the performance tasks from the Common Core Library resources, these efforts are inconsistent across grades and subjects. The fifth grade team administered a greater number of relevant tasks leading to an effective process of analyzing student work that has informed instructional adjustments. The instructional shifts for fluency and coherence in math are minimally understood by teachers and not evident in lessons that were focused on activities rather than concept development. The curriculum includes appropriate content standards for math but the school is still in the process of focusing on the major work of each grade and strategically, adjusting units of study to address the expectations for each grade. Some lessons reflect a coherent plan to scaffold learning from prior skills to new content such as computation skills review in multiplication to serve as the foundation for solving word problems. However, curriculum and lessons are not always inclusive of strategies to support diverse learners including English language learners and higher achieving students. The inconsistencies in curriculum alignment and gaps in supports for specific groups of students hinder how some students can progress through content standards and limits their academic growth.
- Enhance instructional practice across grades and subjects so that questioning and learning activities result in higher order levels of participation and opportunities for students to think critically. (1.2)
 - The principal has engaged administrators and teachers in professional development focused on the CIE competencies from the Danielson framework for teaching as a tool for improving teachers questioning and discussion strategies. Additionally, there is a school wide focus on the need to develop student use of content language in writing and discussions. The workshop approach to lessons is expected across subjects and grades to increase opportunities for teachers to model and students to engage in small group practice of new skills and peer-to-peer discussions. However, across classrooms, these beliefs and strategies are inconsistently demonstrated. While one fifth grade teacher strategically groups his students for character analysis and close reading of text, in another classroom, the lesson is teacher directed with little input from students and

only low-level questions posed by the teacher. Another teacher provided opportunities for students to give each other feedback on their work and collaboratively analyze information for a response to literature. Several lessons, however did not engage students in rigorous work, although tasks may have been designed to lead to higher-level thinking. For example, in one class students were going to develop a survey about a class celebration, collect, and analyze data about items to bring to the party, and represent findings using a bar graph. However, the discussion about preferences for the items overshadowed the significance of the math lesson. In another classroom, the teacher distributed a worksheet and students sat for several minutes with blank paper, confused about the instructions and receiving minimal intervention or support by the teacher. Thus, the inconsistent use of questioning, modeling strategies, and cognitively engaging tasks, result in uneven learning experiences and missed opportunities to accelerate student achievement across grades.

- Improve alignment of assessment practices, including ongoing checks for understanding, to determine student progress towards goals and provide effective feedback to students about their work to inform planning and preparation. (2.2)
 - Teachers have access to a variety of data sources, such as Acuity, running records, Fountas and Pinnell reading levels, M-Class and Everyday Math unit tests, which provide information about student progress and performance in reading and math. Grade level teams of teachers meet weekly to discuss student work and identify ways to adjust instruction based on their observations and analysis of student writing. Some teams use protocols for looking at student work, while others are more engaged in discussions about the challenges they face in their particular classrooms due to behavior needs of students or limited access to resources for English language learners. Within lessons, teachers' assessment of student learning especially for particular subgroups is limited and often results in teachers having to repeat or re-teach after students are sent to small group or independent practice. Grade leaders meet with administrators once a month to review the work of the grade and report about their team's focus, but these conversations are not always timely and sometimes other initiatives take precedence limiting the continuity of the meetings from one month to the next. Although some teams benefit from their regular meeting time to plan and discuss assessments, decide on adjustments to lessons and share practices with colleagues, other teams struggle with little support to advance their team's work in ensuring that students meet the expectations of the CCLS. Consequently, teacher teamwork and inconsistent use of data from multiple assessments including checks for understanding do not always yield desired outcomes of improving student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Weeksville 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