

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Johann DeKalb

Elementary School K270

**241 Emerson Place
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Mitra Lutchman

Dates of review: October 24-25, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 270 is an elementary school with 173 students from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 72% Black, 21% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian 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 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school focuses on a culture of mutual trust, positive attitudes and character development in order to ensure that student and adult learning thrives. (1.4)
 - The school is committed to character development and affirming that positive decision-making in behavior and classwork leads to great results, such as reduced disciplinary infractions and an increased number of students receiving certificates for citizenship. Teachers are treated respectfully and trust school leaders. Students have the opportunity to meet with the principal to discuss school issues such as food selection in the cafeteria, which has resulted in the inclusion of a salad bar and several menu changes. This climate has given rise to a “family” type atmosphere that supports the learning of staff, students and families, and is centered on increasing student achievement.
 - There are many school teams designed to address the social and emotional well-being of students. The Pupil Personnel Team (PPT) addresses students’ performance in class and consists of school clinicians and teachers to provide student supports. The school’s Special Education Initiative Team (SIT) is instrumental in ensuring students with disabilities (SWDs) are mainstreamed, where appropriate, and are working with families to provide feedback about their children’s work, flexible programming and learning needs. The attendance team monitors student attendance, follows up with families to address any medical, social, or emotional needs and uses its external partnerships as support. Since the student population is small, teachers and school leaders know all students by name and teachers work with families to address the needs of the whole child. This comprehensive approach and coordination of services help strengthen student well-being.
- The school conveys to students, families and teachers, high expectations for student performance and is developing supports so they are attainable. (3.4)
 - The school has made attempts to keep all stakeholders informed of the expectations around the urgency to increase student performance. Daily bulletins make staff aware of upcoming professional development offerings, highlight observed best practices in classrooms, and provide relevant school information. Through monthly parent newsletters that include a message from school leadership, parents are made aware of school goals, workshops, school supports, and information relevant to the school’s and students’ progress on the college and career readiness path. School leaders use a research-based framework to support conversations around teacher practice and effectiveness in classrooms and the expectations of student progress throughout the year. Teachers receive feedback from classroom visits and lesson planning. These structures have increased the dialogue amongst all constituents focused on student results, leading to more mutual accountability.

- School leaders and teachers are involved in professional teams, with increased performance of students the primary goal and emerging practices for inquiry work and leadership development. (4.2)
 - There are two inquiry teams; lower grades (PK-2) and upper grades(3-5), focused on charting student progress and the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)in units of study. During the lower grade meeting teachers discussed the majority of students below grade level and determined next steps for improving student performance. Emerging practices such as articulating with other school's inquiry teams, identifying changes needed in teacher practice and planning, and establishing interim benchmarks, have led to a more careful and effective attempt to align teamwork with school goals.
 - Leaders believe that for staff to take ownership of their own growth, administrators cannot operate in a top-down climate. The school's coach has had the opportunity to shadow school leaders to develop her skills at looking at a school holistically, in order to make professional development decisions. Through inquiry teams, teachers have the opportunity to create agendas and alter curriculum maps and unit plans, and there are evolving supports to build staff capacity in content and practice, leading to staff being empowered to make instructional decisions that impact student performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to work on designing curricula that engage students in rigorous units of study emphasizing school's key standards in all subject areas, to promote college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - The Teaching and Learning team, along with administration, met during the summer to look at Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and create teaching points for lessons in science and social studies. They analyzed performance tasks to discover what skills students would need to complete them. However, there has been limited evidence of focused work to incorporate key standards identified through student data and work samples, cognitively engage target student populations, implement the instructional shifts in literacy and mathematics, and integrate the CCLS units of study. As a result curricula lack emphasis on promoting college and career readiness for all learners.
 - Teachers in inquiry teams examine student work as a way to measure whether performance tasks are rigorous enough for all students. The school has focused on teacher questioning and student engagement, to determine if higher order thinking skills and student habits are evident for more demanding curricula. Students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) are provided with scaffolds to support their learning but curriculum maps, units of study and teacher lesson plans do not reflect an integration of practices and habits that students need in order to perform well and demonstrate their thinking, via more difficult tasks and challenging units of study.

- Strengthen teacher pedagogy to reflect alignment with curricula and indicate how the school’s beliefs about how students learn, are driven by a common teaching framework that results in meaningful work by all students. (1.2)
 - School leaders use a research-based framework to inform teacher practice. Currently, teachers and school leaders are focused on planning and preparation, professional responsiveness, classroom environment and instruction, as they reflect on their practices. However, across classrooms, instruction does not yet reflect alignment to curricula and a shared belief on how students learn best. For example, several team members were not aware of the school’s focus on the four components of the framework being implemented, thus limiting teachers’ ability to impact student learning.
 - The school believes in tapping into all learning modalities in order for students to learn. School leaders believe students need to “see it, touch, it, do it”. Teachers are encouraged to use additional teaching aids such as document cameras, projectors and SMART boards to enhance lessons visually. Learning centers/stations are apparent across classrooms and children work in small groups and independently. However, teachers’ questions and students’ tasks do not require higher order thinking skills and do not effectively address the learning styles and needs of all students, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). This results in limited opportunities for students to engage in challenging work that demonstrates higher order thinking.

- Expand the alignment of assessments to curricula and key standards, and analyze results to provide feedback for modifying instructional decisions on the team, grade and classroom level, and improve student achievement. (2.2)
 - Teachers analyze student work through the use of rubrics and the results of assessments aligned to units of study. School leaders collect data from these common assessments, chart them and disseminate the information to teachers. Subsequent grade conferences focus on lesson planning as determined by student results. Students receive progress reports three times per year, in addition to the three standard report card periods. However, assessments are not adequately aligned to curricula and there is no school wide grading policy that ensures teachers and students are receiving appropriate feedback so the school’s ability to advance student performance is limited.
 - School leaders have set targets based on goals and instructional strategies. Teachers use DRA data, state data and student work to determine students’ progress towards goals. Curriculum maps are revisited after common assessments and student strengths and weaknesses are highlighted. However performance goals are not evident for all students and interim benchmarks are not linked to clear and measurable indicators of progress. This impedes accurate monitoring of student progress towards mastery of goals and does not promote effective adjustment of curriculum to support student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Johann DeKalb	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