

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

WORTMAN SCHOOL

Elementary School 19K273

**923 Jerome Street
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Melessa Avery

**Dates of review: January 23-24, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Joyce Stallings-Harte**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Wortman School is an elementary school with 404 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 80% Black, 18% Hispanic, 0% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 93.0%.

Overall Evaluation

The school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers use formative and summative assessments aligned to curriculum to assess student understanding and inform instructional modifications in order to raise student achievement levels. (2.2)
 - In response to the review of last year's State exam results, teams of teachers create and refine common assessments with checklists and rubrics aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to measure student mastery against benchmarks on each grade. Pre- and post-assessments inform teachers which students have meet unit goals. Teachers reflect on their teaching and discuss whether their directions and the visuals provided were clear or confusing to students. This results in revisions for the next assessment administration. Running records are utilized across the school to measure reading growth for all students. Teachers state that rubrics set expectations and students use them as a self-assessment and monitoring tool. This process provides ongoing data on student learning and ensures modification to pedagogy to improve student performance. As a result, student work, including English language learners and students with disabilities, demonstrates 58% and 62% increases of at least one level in English language arts and math performance tasks, respectively.
 - Common assessments and classroom data is evaluated by grade level teams who meet twice weekly to identify trends and needs of sub-groups in order to craft next instructional steps. Teachers use protocols to review student work, and plan for small guided reading group instruction on an ongoing basis. Lead teachers on each grade meet bi-weekly to review progress towards school wide goals. During one of these meetings teachers reviewed the results of reading assessments and determined that across grades, students were unable to accurately identify new vocabulary words. They crafted and implemented cohesive lessons on using context clues and questioning strategies. As a result of these adjustments, 40% of students moved up at least 2 reading levels based on Fountas and Pinnell running records.
- The school's rigorous, and focused curriculum integrates the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and engages students at high levels through challenging learning experiences to ensure improvement in learning. (1.1)
 - The principal's weekly leadership team meetings, along with Network support, guides the alignment of the America's Choice curriculum to the CCLS, in order to promote college and career readiness skills. These are woven into readers/writers workshop model of instruction. Teachers and administrators identified key standards with a focus on main idea, details and patterns based on an in-depth analysis of the New York State English Language Arts and New York State Math tests. These key standards are now integrated into the current content area curriculum including the shifts in English language arts and math to ensure coherency. Bi-weekly meetings of administrators and teachers provide feedback and ensure that units are aligned and include short- and long-term goals. Benchmark

assessments monitor progress across subject areas. Regular revisions adjust sequence of units, and incorporate necessary entry points and strategies for all learners to be successful. For example, concept maps to find the main ideas and details and patterns in a reading passage now support students. As a result, benchmark assessments in English language arts indicate a 15% increase in pre- and post- unit assessments in reading.

- School leaders emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills for all students and provide scaffolds and supports for English language learners and students with disabilities. Teachers review the Depth of Knowledge matrix with students and ensure they use the charts posted in classrooms to engage in discussions and craft questions at high levels. Students state “we are expected to be at level 3 or 4.” Teachers add that while English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities may require scaffolds or supports, they are expected to accomplish the same standards. Teachers use Dr. Robert Marzano’s teacher effectiveness model to engage and support multiple levels of performance and specific instructional strategies such as graphic organizers for reading and writing. Students report that they are able to complete the graphic organizers and that this strategy helps them categorize information to engage in discussion and write effective essays. Accordingly, a 20% increase for 79% of students is noted as they now perform at Level 2 and above on a 4-point rubric.
- The school has built a safe, supportive and respectful learning environment that supports the academic and social growth of students and adults. (1.4)
 - The principal is passionate about her creation of the school’s calm learning environment, honoring the belief that all students should have a peaceful learning environment and enjoy coming to school. She states, “We celebrate kids all day”, “I talk to kids. Anything that I need to know about or do better at I go to a kid”. Students commented “when I need something I can go to a teacher to get more education”. The school has instituted and is reminded of multiple reward structures that recognize attendance, citizenship and scholarship, such as bulletin boards in hallways which highlight the systems which include, Secret Coins,- exchanged at the school store for incentives and books for positive behavior; Student-of-the-Month for students selected for academic success and citizenship and Class Commendations, posted on classroom doors honoring citizenship; Peace Balloons awarded for violence free days and the 100 Book Challenge to acknowledge student achievement and progress in reading. Parents voiced their need for more frequent notices of student progress. Consequently, the school has instituted monthly phone calls and e-mails. Tutoring is now offered as well as more anti-bullying programs and rewards for positive behavior. Parents visit the school on a more regular basis and state that the school is more welcoming, as evidenced by an increase of a 7% in attendance at monthly meetings. Parents comment, “in order for my child to make progress academically the school has a tiered system for academic support.” Tier I includes push-in, 37-1/2 minute extended days and afterschool; Tier II includes 37-1/2 minutes extended days and afterschool and Tier III includes afterschool programming only. Students are grouped according to need where they receive targeted requisite support.

Teachers are acknowledged as well through the Teacher of the Month Awards, Comment Cards and Teacher Secret Coins. These structures contribute to the positive school climate and have resulted in a 37% increase in the number of students receiving Secret Coins, and an increase in the number of days of peace to 79%, indicating a reduction in behavioral incidents.

Guidance meets regularly with students referred through a Pupil Personnel Team and a Least Restrictive Environment team that attends to students whom staff and families identify as requiring additional support, and all students referred receive monthly check-ins with a member of the team, demonstrating that systems to ensure students-at-risk are supported. Results of anecdotal logs show that these students are increasingly able to complete class work and maintain positive behavior in school. The principal comments “people in our school take responsibility for kids”. Staff members, including the principal, ‘adopt kids’ and check-in on their students on a regular basis. The Life Space Crisis Intervention trainer provides ongoing professional development for staff in methods to increase positive behavior throughout the year. The school Climate and Culture Team meets monthly to review data and monitor progress towards goals, noting a 10% decrease in discipline referrals and a 1% increase in attendance.

- A research-based common teaching framework guides the continuous analysis of pedagogical impact on student learning, effectively ensuring that professional growth results in improved instruction. (4.1)

- School leaders use Danielson Framework competencies school wide using questioning and discussion techniques, designing coherent instruction and using assessment in learning, to conduct frequent cycles of classroom observations and provide actionable feedback. Student progress is monitored electronically with a reading level tracking system, pre-and post-unit assessments and formative data. This process allows school leaders to evaluate teacher performance and student progress to determine professional development offerings. These frequent informative short visits provide a lens into the depth of implementation of the chosen Danielson competencies for all teachers in all content areas. This process ensures all teachers are provided with professional development to refine instructional practice as evidenced in improvements in student work products.

- School leaders provide feedback to teachers targeted to the three selected Danielson competencies, in addition to winter and spring formal observations. Follow-up meetings and written reports detail areas of strength and areas that require additional focus. In addition to the school wide goals, each teacher has crafted an additional rubric-based goal that is well supported through a personalized development plan. The principal tracks growth in each Danielson competency so that individual and group professional development is delivered. Additionally, administrators and staff conduct Principles of Learning Walks to “make sure we see everything”. The results of these walkthrough are shared at grade conferences and used to plan for ongoing professional learning opportunities. As a result of the consistent monitoring professional growth, 50% of teachers have moved at least one level on the Danielson rubric for each competency.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teacher pedagogy aligned to expressed beliefs around how students learn best, to engage them in learning experiences that improve student achievement. (1.2)
 - Administrators and teachers believe that students learn best in flexible, small groups that target their particular strengths and challenges. Teams of teachers continuously plan for small group instruction during teacher team meetings. Teachers review student work and discuss follow up grouping to implement for the next lesson. Classroom visits demonstrate students working in groups and engaging in effective discussion techniques. During math lessons students were observed working in one of three groups with varied math problems based on data-identified levels. Teachers plan for differentiated learning tasks, which is a hallmark for learning across classrooms. However, while small, targeted group work is a focus and teachers work to design rigorous differentiated lessons, all teachers do not yet demonstrate a repertoire of teaching strategies to deepen engagement for all learners. This limits strategic implementation of learning tasks and discussion, thus limiting higher levels of student progress.
 - Across classrooms teachers plan to engage all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners, with a focus on vocabulary development. Students use glossaries and word walls to support acquisition and use of language. Students use questions stems and sentence starters for support when engaging in discussions and forming questions. While this is a school wide strategy, in two fifth grade classrooms, teachers directed questions to the whole class, calling on individual students to respond, thus limiting student-to-student thinking and discussion. As a result, high levels of student engagement and participation are not evident across all classrooms.
- Continue to deepen inquiry-based collaborations that use the instructional core to reflectively evaluate student work to address the learning targets of all students. (4.2)
 - All teachers participate in grade-level meetings twice a weekly to update curriculum maps to align with the CCLS, review student work, reflect on teaching strategies and analyze assessment data, that addresses the school's goal of engaging all staff in collaborative meetings to build the instructional capacity of teachers. Teachers use a protocol for looking at student work and all teachers provide feedback to students, along with next instructional steps. While this has resulted in more focused analysis of student learning targets, the process has yet been fully adopted or impacted on instruction or increases in student achievement.
 - The principal identifies lead teachers who meet to review teacher team work and grade level data and plan professional development that focuses on teacher practice and student achievement. While these teachers have opportunities to plan professional development, this structure is not embedded in the fabric of the school, nor does it allow for all teachers to have a voice in key decisions. As a result, effective teacher leadership is hampered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Wortman 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