

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Gerritsen Beach School

Elementary School 277

**2529 Gerritsen Avenue
Brooklyn 11229**

Principal: Jeanne Fish

**Dates of review: February 11-12, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Gerritsen Beach school is an elementary school with 459 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 15% Hispanic, 77% White, and 4% Asian. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 16% 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 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school consistently uses varied ongoing assessments and analyzes student learning outcomes to evaluate student mastery of key skills across classes and over time to inform curricular and instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - In addition to the two performance tasks in English language arts (ELA) and math, teachers make use of a wide variety of assessment data from multiple sources to plan instruction, guide student grouping, make adjustments to teaching, and target interventions. Additionally, they design and modify their own assessments and task-specific rubrics to evaluate student progress around anchor standards such as writing opinion pieces on topics or texts and supporting a point of view with reasons grounded in text evidence. This all-embracing data analysis process enables teachers to identify trends as well analyze their student subgroup data and use these data to identify academic growth as well as areas in which students need further improvement. As a result, teachers make effective curricular revisions and decisions for targeted adjustment of instructional practices, including revising pacing plans, that allows for instructional flexibility to ensure that they address all learners, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). For example, as a result of analyzing Grade 5 persuasive essays in response to the query, “Should Cell Phones be Banned?” the teacher team recognized that although a high need student received positive and specific feedback, along with a highlighted rubric to indicate criteria met, the goal of using quotes accurately from the text and employing transition words still remain areas in need of further development. Accordingly, they decided to provide this particular student with an exemplar to emphasize the rigor and clear alignment of learning content as well as to target evidence needed to improve the quality of her writing. This example of capturing current levels of student achievement, mapping out clear and timely paths for elevating student progress, and pooling information across grades, subjects, and roles underscores the ambitious direction teachers take to facilitate student learning. Thus, 89% of Grade 5 students attained proficiency on the ELA periodic assessment.
- Across classrooms, teacher pedagogy reflects a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best and results in high levels of critical thinking and engagement of all learners. (1.2)
 - Teachers across the school are reflective practitioners who are a part of synergistic learning teams, whose work and findings are shared with other teacher teams. Teachers, during their collaborative meetings, plan for coherent instruction that addresses all students’ entry levels. As a result of sustaining continuous professional learning through follow-up, feedback, and reflection to deepen teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as support implementation in the classroom, teachers consistently and carefully analyze student work. Additionally, they adjust their level of support in accordance with each student’s growing competence in the area of writing, particularly with regard to standard 5.W.5, which states “With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new

approach.” Through the use of a common teaching framework, teachers are thinking across grade levels, building on students’ foundations of conceptual understanding of core content by making links to earlier learning and preparing students for the next level of understanding. This structure facilitates teachers’ abilities to bring coherence to their efforts, share their expertise, plan and practice interventions, revise their units to provide universal access, determine current performance levels, and set targets for their students. For example, teachers analyzed Grade 5 student work, which required students to cull information from various sources to examine the Bill of Rights and present viable arguments with appropriate use of voice, quotes, and citations to convey meaning. As a result of their careful analyses, teachers deliberately intensified their focus on planning for transitions within writing across all grades, to bring cohesion to the work. Consequently, all students, beginning in pre-k, are exposed to a progression of curricular standards and strategically sequenced, discipline-specific instruction, as confirmed by increased levels of proficiency across content areas, high-quality student work products, and improved scores attained on rubrics across all grades. Additionally, there is noted improvement in student development of argument between the baseline assessment teachers analyzed in the fall and their last round of analysis of student work. This is exemplified by an overall 8% gain in student performance on both the ELA and math standardized exams. Furthermore, 100% of ELLs made progress on last year’s exams and an increase of 18.1% of SWDs attained proficiency levels in ELA. Similarly, there was a 22% increase of SWDs reaching proficiency levels 3 or 4 in math.

- School leaders enthusiastically support and track teachers’ development and next steps from the strategic use of targeted, frequent cycles of classroom observations and student work/data, resulting in improved adult and student outcomes. (4.1)
 - The Principal and her Assistant Principal have created a coherent system for supervising and supporting effective teaching across classrooms in the school. This consistent approach to augmenting the development of teachers through short, frequent observations of classroom instruction accurately reflects the complexity and sophistication of the teaching and learning process. Rubrics aligned to the common language provide a viable means for teachers and supervisors to celebrate, reward, and replicate effective teaching, and provide a clear path for improvement. The constructive, actionable feedback enables teachers to make timely adjustments in their teaching as well as informs the schools’ comprehensive professional development plan, which is guided by a detailed and meticulous analysis and is modified throughout the year. Additionally, school leaders analyze the data from their feedback cycles and create graphs that illuminate specific areas in which teachers need further advancement. For example, according to teachers’ self-assessments, which are designed to gauge individual perceptions of their own effectiveness, teachers created professional goals that specifically focus on the identified areas in which they need to improve and are provided with targeted professional development, including an emphasis on engagement strategies for moving toward college and career readiness for all students, to support the attainment of these goals. This robust evaluation system of providing teachers with constructive, specific, and focused feedback has led to improved pedagogical practices.

As a result of sustaining continuous professional learning, follow-up, feedback, and reflection to deepen knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as support implementation in the classroom, 75% of the teachers moved up one level in the continuum on the common research-based framework for teaching. Moreover, this powerful strategy has resulted in improved performance on standardized exams in ELA and math. Accordingly, the school earned an A in student performance on the most recent Progress Report.

- The Principal makes strategic decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by consistently high-quality student work products. (1.3)
 - The Principal has formed internal leadership teams to increase collective accountability, embed collaboration in the routine practices of the school, and to monitor progress of their instructional goals. Teacher teams are programmed to meet twice a week for collaborative planning in addition to a weekly inquiry period on Wednesdays, as part of a School Based Option (SBO). Furthermore, every teacher is programmed for an additional data period, which is used to gather and analyze student information, revisit professional goals, and make adjustments to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students to achieve targeted goals. This strategic structure has resulted in teachers meeting before and after school, and during lunch to implement citywide instructional expectations and attentively evaluate student work products in their cycles of inquiry. Additionally, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teacher, data specialist, and teacher of English as a second language provide tiered interventions to identified students through small group instruction inside and outside of the classroom. These adults use item analyses to create and execute action plans to ameliorate students' academic deficiencies, continuously analyze formative assessment data, and to share learning targets with students. As a result of these individualized and small group interventions, all students, including relevant subgroups, are making great strides across content areas. This is evidenced by student work products that are representative of elevated levels of achievement, increased proficiency of grades on task-specific rubrics, specific teacher feedback that certify levels of accomplishments reached by the students, and students' self-reflections in ELA and math. Additional evidence is exemplified in the increased percentages of students making gains in independent reading levels on the first interval assessment as compared to the baseline in the beginning of the year. For example, according to the Fountas & Pinnell A-Z Text Level Gradient, 81% and 88% of Grade 4 and 5 students, respectively, have increased independent and instructional levels.
- The school engages in reciprocal communication with families to promote dialogue among school constituencies leading to a collective understanding and increased student success. (3.4)
 - School leaders, embracing their college-going culture, project the pervasive, schoolwide belief that all students can succeed in postsecondary education. The Principal and all adults in the building send the message that all students must focus on college as their goal and have designed their curriculum to prepare students for college readiness. They

align course expectations, assignments, goals, and activities vertically across all grades, and espouse the belief that students can achieve at high levels. Furthermore, school leaders and staff engage parents as partners in systems of mutual accountability by routinely providing information for parents and guardians about the academic and social progress of students, expectations of standards, including researching, organizing and retaining factual information from complex texts, students are confident and champion the expectation that they will continue to delve deeper into texts, expand their informational writing across content areas, and work with increased levels of independence, all of which are requisites to accelerate their progress toward college and career readiness. Additionally, parents state that they are provided thoughtful feedback from teachers regarding student progress on classroom and formative periodic assessments, which affords them a comprehensible lens with which to support their children at home. It is through this complementary coordination and guiding coalition that the transition to the CCLS and related assessments is supported. Furthermore, strong references to positive attitudes among staff and students, quality communication, open and participative decision processes, and a shared ethos of caring and concern indicate that the culture is favored by stakeholders. This affirmative culture is further evidenced in the statements “Teachers take a personal interest in the children; they know their potential, and give them opportunities to strive to the next level.” Likewise, the school’s Learning Environment Survey revealed that 93% of the parents responded favorably to the following statements, “The school has high expectations for my child” and “The school clearly communicates its expectations for my child’s learning to me and my child.”

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the alignment of lesson level questions with the high level questions required of students in performance tasks to ensure consistent intensity and elevation of student learning. (1.1)
 - School leaders and staff have a strong grasp of curriculum that embraces the CCLS, with coherence across grades and subject areas, and have taken strategic steps related to identified areas to close achievement gaps for all students, including ELLs, SWDs, and other sub-groups. In addition, they endorse college and career readiness. In a number of classrooms, teachers ask complex and open-ended questions and encourage students to take personal positions on issues, make elaborate contributions, explain their thinking to others, and inspire further exploration. However, this dialogic instruction, including the strategic use of teacher questioning to advance student thinking and promote student-to-student dialogue, was not consistently evidenced across the school. In the majority of classrooms, teachers asked literal questions and evaluated the accuracy of student responses. This results in missed opportunities to stimulate extended thinking, engage students in debate and student-led discussions, and student ownership, thus preventing all students from consistently demonstrating their thinking.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Gerritsen Beach	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