

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Richard Stockton School

Elementary School K297

**700 Park Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: James Brown

Dates of review: January 28-29, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 297 Abraham Stockton is an elementary school with 291 students from Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 44% Black, 51% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 93.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school embraces an inclusive culture of mutual respect and trust, which supports student learning and ensures that students' social and emotional needs are met in a safe environment. (1.4)
 - The principal has established an open door policy and is accessible to students, parents, and teachers. He shares his mobile phone number with families to ensure direct and immediate, if necessary, communication. All parents state that they are comfortable approaching the school leaders and teachers with questions and concerns not only about their children's academic progress but also about support and resources for families. They describe the school as warm, nurturing, and respectful where the staff works as a team to help every child. As one parent says, "the school values respect and they can redirect children's behavior in a positive way." Furthermore, there are monthly assemblies celebrating student achievement and pupils from upper grades are elected to serve on the student council that is mentored by two teachers. The council provides a venue for the children to have conversations that have led to a student generated newsletter, called The 297 Buzz, with student ideas, such as having hallway monitors that are considered by the principal. Moreover, children suggest school-wide celebrations and fun activities such as Backwards Day to the student council or directly to their teachers or the leadership. The tone of the classrooms and the hallways are inclusive, safe and respectful with students paying attention to teachers and interacting politely among themselves and with adults. As a result, the school provides an environment conducive to learning where students, parents, and teachers feel safe, welcome, and appreciated. Furthermore, as indicated in the Online Occurrence Reporting System, the number of suspensions for students decreased by 50 percent, as compared to the same time last year.
 - The full-time guidance counselor knows individual students, including specific information about their home environment. She regularly participates in meetings with teachers about student needs and struggles. Additionally, she takes an active part in the work of the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) team where student learning needs are discussed by a team of general and special education teachers. Furthermore, in collaboration with school leaders, teachers, support staff and parents, she leads attendance improvement initiative for the school. There are Most Improved and Perfect Attendance awards given monthly to deserving students. As a result, students are motivated to participate in learning and have a positive attitude toward school. Furthermore, individual students' attendance has improved this year as by a significant increase of days present for 20 students in grades 2-5 and for 8 students in grade 1 whose absences were excessive last year.
- School decisions regarding budget, partnerships, programming of students and scheduling of teachers support collaborative planning resulting in progress toward meeting school goals. (1.3)

- The principal ensures that programs critical to student development and academic achievement, such as physical education, arts and science, are continued despite the budget cuts. The school has a vibrant collaboration with the Studio-in-a School art program that provides a resident artist five days a week to offer visual arts instruction to all students. Student creative art products are proudly displayed throughout the school. A partnership with NY Cares volunteers facilitates educational trips for groups of 15-20 students on Saturdays. Furthermore, the Good Shepherd, a community based organization, partners with the school to service 80 students in the after school center that complements the school's own Common Core after school program for test readiness in grades 3, 4 and 5, thus providing consistent focus on meeting grade level and school-wide goals. School leaders and teachers encourage the infusion of technology and students have subscriptions to website based educational programs such as BrainPOP, Starfall and ST Math from Mind Research software that are used both in school and at home to learn and review literacy and math skills and concepts. In addition, the principal has obtained a grant to purchase SMART Boards and upgrade classroom technology. As a result, all students, including English language learners and special education students, have an opportunity to increase their learning by participating in extensions of their academic program, especially in the arts and technology.
- Teachers' schedules provide time to meet three to five times a week for collaborative grade level planning, vertical planning teams across grades, content area professional development, and school wide inquiry. Teams headed by grade level instructional lead teachers, a literacy coach, or members of the administration focus on aligning the curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), analyzing student assessment results, and collaborative looking at student work to ensure engaging students in challenging academic tasks. Furthermore, teachers discuss professional articles and compare their instructional practices to research based strategies. For example, Grade 5 teachers enhance their work on the alignment of a math unit with the CCLS by reading articles on helping struggling students with equivalent fractions. Additionally, the RTI team, comprised of general education and special education teachers, as well as an English as a second language (ESL) teacher, the guidance counselor, the literacy coach and the assistant principal, discusses individual student progress and instructional approaches and strategies to meet student needs. As a result, teachers have multiple opportunities to intellectually engage in improvement of their instructional practices via collaborative analysis and review of student work in order to meet the school's goal of improving student performance.
- The leadership team sets data driven goals and action plans for teaching and learning that are shared with the school community, driving continuous school improvement efforts. (3.1)
 - School leaders, in collaboration with teachers, clearly defined this year's focus for school improvement around a short list of goals: building teacher capacity in questioning and discussion techniques and improving student achievement in English language arts (ELA) and math by deepening last year's work with planning and implementing two units of study reflective of instructional shifts and aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. The principal's instructional team initially assessed the school

needs based on the item skills analysis from standardized tests and recommendations from the last Quality Review. As part of ongoing work toward meeting the goals, various teams establish action plans, inclusive of next steps for targeted groups of students. These are continuously monitored for student progress through the use of periodic assessments, ARIS reports, and pre- and post-assessments within units of study. In addition, the school leaders utilize observation cycles as interim checkpoints and as professional support, with feedback to target better questioning techniques. Furthermore, the school's professional development plan, as evidenced in agendas from September on, includes topics such as the Depth of Knowledge and developing essential questions. The leadership communicates school improvement goals and initiatives to parents, teachers and students via the school's leadership team, faculty conferences, team meetings, assemblies, and parent meetings as well as workshops. The principal publishes his Daily Notices outlining instructional focus to the faculty and regularly sends letters to parents that are translated to Spanish and include overviews of current learning topics. As a result, parents and teachers agree that there is intensified effort and commitment to improve student achievement in literacy and math while student progress monitoring results in increased success in completion of final tasks, especially in writing.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the implementation and planning of academic tasks across grade levels and content areas to ensure that all students are cognitively engaged in rigorous learning experiences. (1.1)
 - A review of curriculum artifacts reveals a focus on personal narrative and persuasive and opinion writing, as well as reading and comprehending informational text and the use of academic vocabulary in content areas. The school completed an integration of one Common Core aligned instructional unit of study in English language arts in all grades. In math, after conducting gap analysis of current resources, against the standards in an attempt to ensure that instructional shifts are addressed, the school is beginning to work on the first unit of study reflective of instructional shifts and CCLS. Additionally, a new math program, My Math, was introduced to support the alignment of math curricula with the standards and one teacher has begun planning curriculum maps. Despite these efforts, both ELA and math curricula currently follow outlines from teacher manuals and resources provided by a publisher, with limited efforts to modify academic tasks and make adjustments to prescribed or existing lessons and plans. Similarly, despite the thoughtful plan to ensure CCLS alignment, most lesson plans do not reflect planning for rigorous learning experiences with multiple entry points for diverse learners, especially English language learners. Likewise, although, there is evidence in written curriculum indicating that teachers are expected to ask essential questions to ensure development of higher-order skills and the implementation of the Depth of Knowledge (DOK), most lessons do not evidence sufficient planning for questioning and rigorous habits. As a result, learning progress and acceleration are limited.

- Enhance instructional practices across the school to consistently provide scaffolds and opportunities for all students to demonstrate higher order thinking and standards mastery. (1.2)
 - The leadership has chosen to focus the school on using the DOK to strengthen teacher capacity in developing probing questions and student engagement in discussions, based on Danielson's framework. Although teachers of visited classes are attempting to align their questions to the DOK to start student discussions during accountable talk and in partnerships, questioning in lessons is mostly aimed at recalling or retelling. Similarly, embracing a developing school belief around access to rigorous curriculum through flexible grouping and scaffolding, teachers in most literacy classes are beginning to group students according to their reading level. However, lessons across the school are still predominantly teacher-centered thus inconsistently addressing student learning styles and needs and limiting opportunities for student discussions, independent thinking and higher order learning. Similarly, some scaffolding strategies such as the use of graphic organizers and SMART board resources were evident but not thoughtfully embedded in lessons to ensure that English language learners or higher achieving students had opportunities to access or extend their learning. Consequently, inconsistent presence of scaffolds and higher order questions lessens student entry points to learning and hinders student participation in class discussions and access to rigorous content.

- Build on the use of common assessments to make effective instructional adjustments in every day practices to ensure all students have opportunities to receive focused feedback and engage in self-assessment. (2.2)
 - The school collects student achievement data from multiple assessments and grade level teachers receive class data reports, such as item skills analysis. Additionally, teachers administer pre- and post-assessments, aligned with standards, and begin analyzing them. For example, the RTI team, in collaboration with the school data specialist, is beginning to create class spreadsheets including individual student assessment results measured by the reading running records and primary spelling inventory from the Words Their Way program to monitor student progress toward their goals. Moreover, in visited classes, most teachers walked around and took notes as well as used formative assessment checklists to record student mastery of literacy and math skills. However, these efforts are not resulting in adjustments to lessons and curriculum plans, thus there are missed opportunities to leverage this data toward meeting instructional goals. Similarly, although teachers across grades use 4 point standards-based rubrics for assessing writing as well as math problem solving, feedback to students is mostly general, thus not providing students with next steps and strategies to achieve grade level and standards based benchmarks. Most students do not reflect on their progress in content areas. As a result of these inconsistencies, identification of needs of relevant subgroups, including English language learners is minimized, thus impeding the school's efforts to increase student achievement across subject areas for all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Richard Stockton Elementary K297	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