

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Philippa Schuyler

**Middle School K383
1300 Greene Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11237**

Principal: Jeanette Smith

Dates of review: May 21 - 22, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Lillian Druck

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Philippa Schuyler is a middle school with 844 students from grade 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 62% Black, 29% Hispanic and 9% other students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff work cohesively to promote a respectful, caring environment that supports adult learning and enhances students' academic and personal growth. 1.4
 - The school's theme of "Collaboration, Common Core and Celebration" promotes a positive school culture that supports students' academic and social emotional skills. Various cultural arts programs bring together parents, students and staff to celebrate the school's diversity and progress in meeting their goals. Such programs include student performances for Black History and Hispanic Heritage months, seasonal concerts that highlight students' talents, an annual international trip to raise cultural awareness and assembly programs to celebrate students' accomplishments. Student government activities encourage student voice and leadership. The student government executive board meets with the principal on a monthly basis to discuss ideas to build community and improve the school. Students' suggestions for monthly themes such as Healthy Heart, Breast Cancer Awareness and School Spirit Days have been incorporated into the school calendar, thereby engaging all members of the school community in efforts to collaboratively improve the school. As a result, students report that their ideas are valued and that they contribute in a productive and highly visible manner toward creating a positive, welcoming and inclusive school culture.
 - Each assistant principal coordinates activities and support services for students on their respective grades. Homeroom teachers meet daily with students at the beginning of the school day to take attendance and get them off to a productive start and at dismissal to bring closure to the school day. Homeroom teachers in collaboration with the school's attendance committee closely monitor attendance and immediately contact families regarding concerns. As a result, in spite of weather-related and transportation issues encountered this school year, the average attendance rate reflects a slight increase of 1% as compared to last year. In addition, students report that teachers and supervisors know them well and tend to their individual needs through individual conversations, small group guidance sessions, phone calls to their homes, and meetings with their parents to ensure that they are on track toward meeting their goals. The assistant principals, deans and guidance counselors utilize a proactive referral system which includes interventions involving immediate contact with parents to address concerns and issues that come to their attention. Parent meetings are key components that contribute to improving attendance and providing social emotional support, resulting in the positive development of students' skills.
- School leaders evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices with a clear focus on promoting professional growth and reflection, thereby impacting classroom instruction. 4.1
 - The supervisory team conducts frequent formative classroom visits and formal observations with a focus on improving classroom practice. New

teachers participate in the New Teacher Center mentoring program which includes a school-based mentor that helps support the development of their content and pedagogical skills through demonstration lessons and class inter-visitations. These supports assist new teachers in establishing a positive tone and setting routines and procedures to enhance student learning in their classrooms. All teachers receive feedback based on the Danielson teaching framework. This year's focus on improving questioning and discussion techniques in the classroom provides a lens for supervisors and teachers to refine instructional practice through the implementation of quality strategies to deepen student understanding as outlined in the teaching framework. As a result, observation reports and conversations with teachers indicate that questioning has evolved from asking questions that require one correct answer to questions that are open-ended to promote student-thinking with multiple perspectives. Therefore, questioning strategies have improved in most classrooms as noted in feedback reflecting an increase in effective ratings as measured by the teaching framework rubric familiar to teachers and used by supervisors during class visits.

- The principal organizes resources, partnerships and time effectively to build teacher capacity and support instructional goals in order to achieve success in meeting students' needs. 1.3
 - Each grade level is fully supported by a designated assistant principal and staff who ensure that students have the necessary materials, academic resources and programmatic accommodations aligned to the instructional goals of the school. A strong partnership with the New York Junior Tennis League offers after school tennis lessons and provides test preparation for specialized high school exams, college and career readiness skills and tutoring sessions to support students in meeting their goals. Participation in the I-Learn Program engages select classes in research projects that integrate technology. Consequently, the principal's effective utilization of available funding and productive work with partnerships result in high quality student work products such as argumentative essays, persuasive writing and project based research papers compiled in work folders and displayed in classrooms, thereby maximizing the school's efforts to meet students' needs.
 - Program groupings to support the school's efforts in closing the achievement gap focus on Level 1 and 2 students and students performing in the bottom and top 25% of each grade. Teacher teams raised concerns about the lack of progress of students in these categories. Therefore the work of teams includes revising extended day practices to include greater emphasis on providing targeted instruction based on learning gaps surfaced through the item skills analysis of assessments and student work. For example, the analysis of the first performance-based assessment indicated weaknesses in the structure of essays and in the use of textual evidence to support claims. Therefore, teachers produced graphic organizers which helped students gather relevant details, quotes, anecdotes and other textual evidence to support claims and arguments in their persuasive and argumentative essays. The graphic organizers also assisted students with the organization of their ideas. As a result, student performance improved as noted in the end of year performance-based assessment writing products that demonstrate the increased use of relevant textual evidence to support students' claims

and essays that include a clear and sequential overall structure as measured by Common Core aligned writing rubrics.

- Teachers use common assessments that are aligned to key standards to gain an understanding of student progress toward goals, resulting in adjustments to curriculum and instruction. 2.2
 - Each department has a grading policy and generates department grading contracts so that students and parents understand how they will be evaluated. Teachers use common performance-based assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula to provide actionable feedback regarding students' strengths and areas of need. For example, rubrics for point of view essays focus on author's point of view, use of textual evidence, organization and sentence structure. Teachers provide feedback to students by highlighting their performance in each area so that students are aware of their performance and make improvements in their learning along the continuum which consists of beginning, developing, competent and accomplished ratings. As a result, students report that writing rubrics helped them improve their skills in analyzing text, using textual evidence to support their claims, addressing all aspects of the tasks and organizing their writing so that it includes strong introductory and concluding paragraphs.
 - The analysis of student work produced as part of baseline and midterm performance assessments result in adjustments to curriculum and instructional strategies to ensure that students demonstrate progress in meeting their learning goals. Curricular and instructional adjustments included providing graphic organizers as scaffolds to help students organize their thinking, using anchor papers as models to guide student writing, re-teaching content using resources from the Common Core library, and communicating across grades and subjects to increase vertical alignment and academic support for students. As a result, student performance demonstrates a steady increase across grades and subjects. In one 6th grade class, 90% of the students improved from Levels 2 and 3 in a performance based assessment administered in the fall to Levels 3 and 4 in a post assessment administered in the spring. In addition, average grades across subjects improved as noted in progress reports and course grades available to students and parents.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine teaching practices based on data so that purposeful lessons fully challenge all students and result in improved learning outcomes. 1.2
 - Clear expectations for teaching as outlined in the Danielson Framework support the school's beliefs that students learn best when they participate in a student centered learning environment. Lesson plans include essential questions and activities for enrichment and remediation groups. However, questions of varied complexity, graphic organizers, and purposeful scaffolds to activate thinking and provide multiple entry points to lessons were inconsistent across classrooms. Strategic supports for high needs students, English language learners and former English language learners, including lesson extensions and peer conversations,

are not available across all classrooms to encourage high levels of participation. As a result, some students are not always motivated to fully participate in discussions that foster deep thinking and maximize learning. This limits the range of opportunities that would enable these students to work to their full potential.

- Strengthen the delivery of lessons and curricula so that academic tasks promote higher levels of thinking and cognitive engagement for all students.
1.1
 - As part of the Common Core pilot, the school receives support and guidance in the design and implementation of coherent units of study across subjects. The school's curriculum maps include units of study that integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) including the instructional shifts. Curriculum maps outline topics, essential questions, Common-core aligned standards, content related skills, assessments and resources. However, in some classrooms students quickly completed tasks requiring minimal effort and academic tasks for students to probe deeply into their thinking were limited. In addition, in classrooms where small groups were involved, learning activities did not consistently reflect the use of data to cognitively engage all students in high level tasks to promote thinking skills, which hinders meaningful student engagement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Philippa Schuyler Middle 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