

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 398 Walter Weaver

Elementary 17K398

**60 EAST 94 STREET
BROOKLYN
NY, 11212**

Principal: Tammy Katan Brown

**Dates of review: May 13-14, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 398 Walter Weaver is a/an Elementary school with 369 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 81% Black, 9% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a safe nurturing environment that supports students' academic and socio-emotional needs. (1.4)
 - The school has a safe environment that promotes teaching and learning for students. The morning announcements greet the students with a pledge and poetry. Administrators and parents usher in students to begin each day with positive reinforcement by recognizing improved behavior, “acts of kindness” demonstrated and citizenship. The school has a diverse population of students, as such; the school provides uniforms, backpacks and materials to children that reside in temporary housing. Administrators, staff and parents donate money, goods and time to all students. Due to a limited budget, parents partner with the school to conduct workshops on financial planning, parenting, cooking, crocheting, support groups, and the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Students feel very connected to the adults in the school whom they frequently interact with when needed. At lunch, the parents and staff assist to positively ensure that students are accountable for their academics and behavior. During the lunch periods, some staff give up their time to tutor students in areas of need and parents volunteer to help organize games and monitor recess. In addition, the administration has lunch with their students who need individualized attention. As such, cafeteria incidents have decreased by 50% since September 2012 through April 2013. Many parents welcome the feedback they receive from classroom teachers regarding their children’s behavior through daily or weekly progress reports to monitor personal behavior. In addition, they also feel that the school provides a safe environment for their children during and after school. As a result of these ongoing supports, the discipline and tone in the school remains positive with a focus on social emotional and academic learning, as evidenced in decreased OORS incident reports and structures for students’ social accountability.
- School leaders are beginning to use observations of classroom teaching and the analysis of student learning outcomes to elevate teacher practices and strategies that result in teachers’ professional growth. (4.1)
 - Through short and frequent observations aligned to a research based rubric, school leaders provide feedback on classroom lessons and teacher practice. With a focus on English language arts instruction, teachers have begun discussion on where they see themselves on a continuum and the supports they need in meeting next steps. Student work products and other assessment data such as Acuity and performance tasks are used to ensure that student goals are being met and aligned to teacher growth. The school’s professional development plan reflects the input of classroom observation and data to provide support for teachers. Specific needs such as the integration of the Common Core and other areas, such as lesson planning, data-driven classroom practices and assessments are addressed in grade and content specific groups led by grade

leaders. The plan is shared with the staff and teachers have the choice to participate in external programs to support them in the identified areas of their need. In addition, teachers also are given the option to attend professional development series via "Lunch and Learns". These workshops are provided to support all pedagogues in developing best practices to enhance student work products and their professional growth. Some of the topics offered have included effective questioning, discussion and rubric alignment. As a result, expectations for teacher practice are becoming clearer with staff indicating that they are aware of their strengths and next steps to improve.

- Faculty benefit from the professional collaborations to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of the pedagogical community. (4.2)
 - The school is beginning to use a team approach to address necessary changes in curriculum, instruction and student outcomes. All teachers take part in weekly grade level inquiry meetings organized around learning from students' work. The administrators selected lead facilitators to present and record implications for teacher practice. This feedback is used to generate the agenda for future meetings. These grade meetings focus in all subject areas and the school is developing alignment to the CCLS. When grade 2 teachers met they were charged with examining ways to ensure that both teachers and students will be ready to meet higher standards. Other teams use an inquiry approach to empower teachers to share their voice, address individual and groups of students who are particularly challenging to engage. Consequently, teacher teams and committees engage in some problem-solving, action planning and strategizing for student intervention in order to improve student achievement.
 - Grade 5 teacher team engages in ongoing collaboration that is centered on student work, assessment and improving curricular access for all students. For example, they analyzed essays the students had written and discussed the different aspects of the essays to determine areas of strength and weakness. They focused on introductions and conclusions as areas of need and re-assess students' progress. They put a plan together to reteach these areas. Each teacher on the team plays an important role in the conversation and colleagues are continually pushing one another to try new techniques. Teachers report that sixth grade essays and reading levels are showing some improvements as a result of this process.

What the school needs to improve

- Create a coherent curriculum aligned to key state standards to engage a variety of learners in rigorous tasks, to support college and career readiness skills. (1.1).
 - The school's instructional cabinet reviewed the citywide instructional expectations (CIE) and selected the units of study

that would support the integration of the CCLS. However, the inconsistency of rigorous tasks to meet the needs of all students including low and high performing learners was not evident to support critical thinking at the appropriate levels. Tasks included responding to basic informational questions from a textbook. When asked, students struggled to explain the purpose of what they were learning and how it related to what was learned previously. There was limited evidence throughout that key standards have been identified and were being reinforced. There were some efforts to incorporate Common Core aligned tasks, but only a few classrooms demonstrated adaptability of tasks to meet student needs. Consequently, there is a lack of rigor and limited accessibility that is resulting in low levels of student achievement as evident on the local assessments, New York State Assessments and the New York City Progress Report.

- Further develop teacher practice to reflect the schools' beliefs about how students learn best and are aligned to curricula so that all students are able to produce meaningful work. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best when they can make connections to their real lives and when they are engaged in tasks that require high levels of student discussion. However, across classrooms, lessons are generic and do not usually provide meaningful opportunities for differentiated learning. Many of the tasks were the same for all students which resulted in some students finishing assignments earlier, while others still needed additional support. Some of the work that was reviewed lacked specificity and academic rigor. Student tasks in folders and during lessons lack clear expectations for learning with limited feedback given to students. Therefore, students are unable to check work against standards based benchmarks. The lack of appropriate strategies such as differentiated tasks, critical thinking questions and various modalities such as tactile and auditory supports hinder opportunities for increased student learning for all learners.
- Ensure alignment of assessments to curricula to promote adjustments to instruction that meet all students' need in order to improve performance. (2.2)
 - Collection of common assessments, performance task, Fountas and Pinnell Reading level, conferencing and Acuity are used to check for ongoing student growth which is analyzed by the school's data specialist. Adjustments are made to curriculum maps based on student performance. A few teachers analyze student reading levels to determine the gaps in student learning in order to adjust their instructional plans. Two teachers were observed taking notes on student learning while working with individual students on a challenging task. In other classrooms observed, teachers circulated the room only as a means to check on completion, rather than checking for understanding. Although there is some indication of teachers using ongoing strategies to check for students' understanding this is not an embedded process across classrooms. As a result, teachers' use of assessment data as a means to inform and adjust

classroom instruction is limited, thereby not consistently meeting the needs of all learners as observed across classrooms.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 398 Walter Weaver	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