

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

PEACE Academy

**Middle School K596
300 Willoughby Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Lisa Reiter

Dates of review: December 18-19, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

MS 596 is a middle school with 117 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 75% Black, 21% Hispanic, 0.9% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 88.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is developing curricula that is engaging and challenging with highlighted key standards providing multiple pathways for all learners. (1.1)
 - The school began looking at its curricula at the end of last school year and began to "unpack" skills students would need in order to reach mastery on specific standards. In order to ensure alignment with the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), the school incorporated the instructional shifts highlighted for grades six through eight. Within the curriculum maps for English language arts (ELA) Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) have been incorporated in integrated in all units of study. The school is beginning to identify skills that foster independence and self-regulation in order for students to increase stamina and persistence in tasks they find challenging resulting in more consistency including higher order thinking skills emphasized within the curricula
 - Student data from Acuity and exit slips are used for math and conference notes and Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) assessments are used by all content area teachers to assess student strengths and weaknesses. With a focus on over aged reluctant readers, content teams and grade teams plan multiple level tasks with supports such as explicit modeling and additional academic intervention service (AIS) personnel to engage all learners. Teachers are beginning to use student work as an additional source of data in order to plan curricula and academic tasks that are beginning to elevate student engagement in tasks that are cognitively demanding.
- School leaders have focused on supporting the needs of students and staff in order for them to develop and grow in a safe and inclusive environment. (1.4)
 - After reviewing the results of the school's Learning Environment Survey (LES) school leaders developed a handbook that clarifies appropriate student behavior which was distributed to faculty and students. The school hired student services personnel who work as a team to create an intervention and peer mediation program in order to take a more preventative approach towards discipline. The school developed a curriculum to be used during advisory periods that is influenced by students' perceptions and beliefs on how to address conflict, what success looks like in school and self-esteem. Town hall meetings with administrators and staff enable adults to gain insight on student issues so they can best support them. School leaders have also created structures enabling teachers to have conversations around their work and instructional practices with peers with a focus on needed supports. As a result, their work with students is more effective enabling the school to build mutual trust and respect among school leaders, teachers, and students.
 - The school uses their advisory program in order to know all students and their needs. The services of the guidance counselor and a part-time social worker support students and families who need additional

resources. The school-based family worker monitors student attendance and reaches out to families in order to keep them informed of the standard of attendance and supports available to families. School leaders are aligning structures to support the response to intervention model (RTI) in order for students to receive academic/behavioral supports that are monitored over time. This has resulted in a 14% increase in student daily attendance and a dramatic decrease in classroom and school incidents requiring student suspension since this last September.

- School leaders have established a vision for school improvement and have goals based on data that are tracked which are beginning to result in adjustments and modifications to curricula and instruction. (3.1)
 - The school's overarching goals for the year address the improvement of student performance and progress in ELA and math and the interventions necessary to address students' behavioral and academic needs in order for them to be successful. These goals are apparent in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and the Principal Performance Review (PPR) which a shared with school staff. The school has increased the number of interim benchmarks checks in order to monitor student progress in short intervals of time. For example, the results of student performance on Teachers College Readers and Writers Project (TCRWP) reading assessments resulted in the school delaying the required common core learning standards (CCLS) unit of study in ELA until January in order for teachers to make adjustments in instruction and curriculum maps to support student needs and strengthen the unit so that is more rigorous and challenging. As a result, goal setting and progress monitoring are beginning to drive efforts to accelerate student learning.
 - School goals were derived from multiple sources of information. School leaders relied on the data from classroom observations, student performance, the school's progress report, and last year's quality review (QR) with a consideration of the additional new staff. School leaders and the executive committee determine the greatest needs based on CIE and student outcomes to identify trends that need to be supported through professional development. Teachers also have the opportunity to request additional assistance in areas they find challenging and those supports are provided by internal or externally consultants. The school is beginning to see some changes in teacher practice and higher levels of progress on academic tasks due to more effective action planning at the school level.

What the school needs to improve

- Align teacher practices with the school's beliefs about how students learn best when engaged in rigorous curricula so that all students produce meaningful work. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best when academic tasks are authentic and have real-life application. All students are capable of learning at high levels and are accountable to the same Standards. Classroom teachers provide supports to students who are struggling and enrichment for those already at proficiency levels. Students are provided

ample opportunities for discourse with their peers to defend their opinions/ defend a position and experience short, focused lessons from teachers that enable them to practice learned skills in various group settings. Nevertheless, there were uneven levels of student discussions across classrooms and lessons did not provide ample practice time for students to think deeply about their tasks resulting in a misalignment between school curricula, the school's belief system and teaching strategies. Consequently, students do not consistently produce meaningful work products.

- Strengthen the development of teacher-created assessments and alignment to the curricula in order to determine student progress and needed adjustments to curricula and instruction. (2.2)
 - The school has increased the number of data sources used to determine how students are making progress toward instructional goals and adopted CCLS. Teachers monitor student learning through exit slips, item analysis of common assessments and provide students feedback about their work on post- its and through Skedula, an online grading system. The grading policy reflects ongoing assessment of project-based performance tasks for mastery and has assisted in the increased rate of students passing core subject areas during the marking periods. However, the school has primarily focused on the ELA content area thus limiting needed adjustments in other content area curriculum and needed information to determine student progress.
 - Teachers have created classroom assessments to monitor student progress and rely on do now activities, exit slips, conferencing with students, and interruptions during student practice time to highlight student work and check for understanding. However, these practices are inconsistent across classrooms and students rarely self-assess their work. This limits teachers' ability to make adjustments in classroom instruction and to meet the needs of all learners.
- Expand the use of classroom observations including analysis of student work and classroom data to provide effective professional development for all staff. (4.1)
 - The school uses the Danielson teaching framework to support teacher development and is participating in the Teacher Effectiveness Program (TEP). The school has focused on supporting teachers in the areas of questioning, student grouping and management of student behavior in order for all students to have access to the curriculum. Teachers are provided articles and other professional development materials to strengthen the culture for learning. During short frequent observation cycles teachers are provided feedback to strengthen their teaching effectiveness in classrooms. However, the implementation of specific recommendations is inconsistent, thus limiting the opportunities to strengthen teacher practices and support their development.
 - Professional development is designed to support the implementation of TCRWP, CCLS integration, and instructional shifts in math and ELA. External consultants from Teachers College provide extensive support in ELA and the network provides professional development in math. Each

consultant focuses on the school's primary emphasis of student engagement and multiple pathways and opportunities for students to interact with the curricula. The school's executive committee and teacher leaders are part of professional development decisions and support strengthening teacher practice. However, student work products and learning outcomes are not yet consistently taken into account when planning for professional development. As a result, teacher growth that leads to improved student performance is hampered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: PEACE Academy	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