

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Connie Lekas School

Secondary School 811

**2525 HARING STREET
BROOKLYN
NY, 11235**

Principal: Antoinette Rose

Dates of review: March 20-22, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Joseph

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. K811 Connie Lekas School is a Secondary School with 374 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 50% Black, 23% Hispanic, 19% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 100% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 86.0 %.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A coherent curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) offers opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous learning experiences resulting in increased levels of achievement. (1.1)
 - The school created units of study across content areas to engage all students along a continuum of cognitive ability levels in rigorous tasks in order to prepare them for appropriate post-secondary outcomes. The analysis of comparative assessment data collected through the school-wide use of the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) from the 2011-12 school year to the fall 2012- 13 school year identified the key standards of using informational text for argument writing in English language arts (ELA) and measurement and data in mathematics. Lead teachers comprise a curriculum team that meets after school on a weekly basis to design learning opportunities in order to develop skills connected to grade level standards and Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) in order to support students' functional independence and post-secondary readiness.
 - The March unit of study, "Things that Move in New York City (NYC)" includes daily journal writing utilizing a developmental approach that meets students at their cognitive level of ability. In math measurement and data tasks are connected to functional skills in school and at work sites to prepare students with marketable vocational skills as evident at the 25 in-house and community based work sites. In 12:1:4 classrooms where students have significant intellectual disabilities, students engage in choice making to identify specific transportation modes being used in NYC as a prerequisite to future travel training, as appropriate. As a result of this comprehensive approach to core curricula all students are consistently engaged in highly rigorous and relevant tasks.
- Across classrooms teacher practices reflect a research based, coherent belief system on how students learn best, providing multiple entry points for learning that results in meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - A coherent belief system on how students learn best includes the consistent use of visuals, modeling, graphic organizers and technology to provide access to curriculum and instruction. Interactive white boards are used in all classrooms to adapt lessons as evidenced in the 12:1:1 class where students engaged in journal writing using pictures, symbols, words and sentences as appropriate to meet individual instructional needs. Communication systems such as picture boards, programmed voice output devices and Picture Exchange Communications Systems (PECS) are utilized by nonverbal students providing them a voice and the ability to actively participate in instruction and discussion. Additionally routines as part of a structured classroom environment are evident throughout the school. Every student follows a visual schedule throughout the day to prepare them for transition from one activity to the next. As an extension to classroom instruction students are given the opportunity to generalize learned skills as part of vocational training in a variety of in-house and community based jobs providing experience and preparation to sustain

themselves beyond age 21. The impact of these cohesive practices is an increase in student engagement including those with the most significant intellectual disabilities as reflected in student work in portfolios and on bulletin boards. This has resulted in higher levels of student achievement as evidenced by a 23% increase in ELA SANDI scores from September to the midyear assessment period.

- The school works as a unified team to create a culture of trust and collaboration ensuring the social-emotional and academic growth of students and staff. (1.4)
 - The school implements a variety of complimentary positive behavior supports and strategies resulting in a learning environment that consistently promotes social-emotional skill acquisition across classrooms. The school has a universal positive behavior support program, STARS which stands for self-control, take responsibility, have a positive attitude, respect others, be safe. STARS behavior matrixes are posted in strategic locations throughout the building to identify what is expected in terms of appropriate behavior for all students and staff. Students can articulate the meaning of the acronym STARS and express what is appropriate behavior as well as remind each other of how to handle difficult situations. “Connie Lekas” bucks are distributed to students based on points received in alignment to the STARS matrix. The bucks are redeemed at the school store. The daily routine of the Get Read to Learn Program (GRTL) movement program in every classroom is part of the school culture. Every teacher and paraprofessional has been trained in the GRTL methodology. This program is improving self regulation and resulting in a decrease in behaviors that typically interfere with learning. In addition to the organization of a student council, a self-advocacy group has been established in association with the Self Advocacy Association of New York State (NYS) to give students the opportunity to advocate on behalf of themselves and others on a particular issue or concern that affect people with disabilities. This group recently traveled to the District 75, district office and met with the superintendent to advocate for a new piece of equipment that would assist students in wheelchairs to safely transfer out of their wheelchair promoting the development of leadership capacity in support of student independence.
 - The specialized therapeutic learning environment provided by the ratio of students to staff at 811K enables every student to be known by more than one adult who has a deep understanding of each student’s social-emotional and academic needs. The school has formed a Boys and Girls Club facilitated by the guidance department to provide a forum for students to discuss sensitive issues that are typical to teenagers. Students expressed that they look forward to Fridays when clubs are scheduled to discuss issues including relationship problems. Administration in collaboration with the guidance department has established a protocol to identify students at risk. This protocol gives teachers the opportunity to address high level concerns with counselors so that an action plan can be established. Proactive strategizing with families has led to partnerships with a variety of agencies and organizations including Heartshare and the Hospital for Special Surgery resulting in the provision of additional supports to families such as customized wheelchairs and respite services. The school has partnered

with the Association for the Handicapped and Retarded Children Organization (AHRC) to provide an after school program and respite for families. This after school program helps students with their homework and engages them in recreational activities. The program is staffed by 811K employees who know each of the students and provide targeted support. As a result of the supportive learning environment and positive school culture there is a 50% decrease in the number of principal and superintendent suspensions as compared to last year.

- School leaders maintain a learning environment that consistently communicates high expectations for staff, students and families in achieving progress for all students. (3.4)
 - The school currently uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FfT) and utilizes the language and critical attributes of the framework to communicate high expectations for teaching. Teachers have identified their own professional goals using the FfT, and a series of professional development workshops are provided for teachers and paraprofessionals after school and on weekends. This professional development series focuses on topics related to Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) such as looking at student work and data review to make instructional decisions. Administration conducts learning walks on Wednesdays with a focus on a specific FfT competency, and feedback is provided to teachers in a timely fashion. As a result, teachers report that they feel supported by administration and have benefited from the intervisitations, professional development opportunities and their participation on teacher teams. This system of mutual accountability across the school community has resulted in student achievement gains as evidenced by a 130% growth in mathematics from fall 2012 to the mid-year 2012-13 as measured by the SANDI assessment.
 - The school has developed successful partnerships with families to support student progress and has implemented a variety of strategies to keep families informed of their child's progress. Parents express that the school maintains excellent communication with them and provides information and strategies on how to promote social, functional, vocational and academic skills at home and in the community. Through daily communication sheets, a monthly newsletter and an automated phone system parents are consistently apprised of their child's progress and needs, school events, as well as emergencies, should they arise. The parent coordinator works closely with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and parents to provide ongoing workshops throughout the course of the year including such topics as life after high school, guardianship, curriculum and Common Core, and vocational training. Many of the workshops have been identified as a result of information collected on a parent survey distributed at the beginning of the school year. The school's refined system to maintain a culture of high expectations for learning as well as for other personal achievements, such as increased independence in traveling via public transportation, is well noted by parents. The strong partnership with families is evidenced by a 2% increase in attendance from March 2012 to March 2013. This is a significant increase in light of this year's school bus strike.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand teachers' professional collaborations to strengthen instructional capacity to support progress toward goals for all students. (4.2)
 - An identified group of teachers comprise the curriculum and data teams that meet after school hours and have begun the process of looking at student data and work to make informed instructional decisions. In addition, most teachers are engaged in professional learning communities during the school day to discuss pertinent topics related to student progress. Teachers collaborate to share strategies for improving the implementation of the GRTL program to decrease behaviors that interfere with learning. While broad data is loosely referred to, a deeper analysis is not taking place thereby limiting teachers' ability to determine trends that lead to more purposeful adjustments that all can adopt cohesively. This lack of uniformity in the inquiry structure leads to missed opportunities for accelerated student growth.

- Develop structures to evaluate data relative to student progress toward mastery to build coherence and optimize student achievement outcomes. (5.1)
 - School leaders and faculty are developing a process to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices in response to student learning needs. A Google doc has been established to collect data which is beginning to be used by all teachers to measure students' progress towards meeting IEP goals. The school has instituted a rubric to assess student learning regarding the skills being taught and the level of prompts necessary to complete tasks in order to move students along a continuum of independence. However, these rubrics are generic in nature and loosely connected to specific content skills. This limits the school's ability to conduct frequent, interim checks of student learning for each cohort of students in order to make school wide adjustments to close the achievement gap, especially in literacy.
 - Teacher teams, facilitated by teachers who have been identified to take the lead, meet on a weekly basis to examine student work products to determine future planning adjustments. Teachers' analysis and discussion is anchored by each team member's current knowledge base. While completed logs are submitted to supervisors for review during weekly administrative cabinet, specific attention to what teachers need to learn in specific content areas is inconsistent. The result is the lack of an integrated and systematic way to target teachers' development that impacts students' mastery of IEP goals connected to the CCLS.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Connie Lekas 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