

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Robert Simon Elementary School

01M064

600 East 6th Street

Manhattan

NY  10009

Principal: Marlon L. Hosang

Dates of review: March 19-20, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 064 Robert Simon is an elementary school with 324 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 24.0% Black, 60.0% Hispanic, 7.0% White, and 8.0% Asian students. The student body includes 9.0% English language learners and 32.0% special education students. Boys account for 57.0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43.0%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers use a broad range of assessment data to determine students' strengths and needs, leading to meaningful instructional planning and interventions for students. (2.2)
 - This year's implementation of *Success For All* (SFA) is the organizing system for literacy assessments and monitoring. Teachers utilize an online tracker of reading skills and comprehension, and students then shift regularly into different reading groups based on their measurable progress. Similarly, teachers administer rubric-based writing prompts from *Adventures in Writing* and class writing assignments, aligned to key standards to gauge students' writing proficiency across grades. Finally, teachers examine students' data from common assessments, including periodic assessments from Acuity and unit tests in both *Math in Focus* and *Investigations*, to know students' progress in math. There is good consistency in how teachers collect, analyze and share feedback with students and other teachers, as they adjust lesson and unit planning based on their analysis of students' data. For example, all teachers meet for data conferences quarterly with school leaders and coaches, which ensure that assessment data informs instructional decisions. This common approach to reviewing assessments provides teachers with a clear portrait of students' strengths and areas of need, which then leads to strategic adjustments in instructional planning and targeted interventions.
- There is strong investment in school goals and vision by major stakeholders, which leads to shared commitment to improved student outcomes. (3.1)
 - School leaders conduct a comprehensive needs assessment from student and teacher data, while staff members contribute input into goal-setting during team and faculty meetings. Together, administrators, teachers, and parents formulate school wide goals around improving students' achievement in English language arts and nurturing a more positive school culture. Tracking of goals has shown that for three years, student performance has flat-lined at 30% proficiency on State English language arts exams, so this has become a key instructional goal that has been addressed with deliberate changes and instructional shifts. Staff members have researched various literacy programs and implemented SFA as a comprehensive approach to skills-based literacy improvement, robust professional development, and committee structures to improve school culture. As a result of the SFA implementation this year, student reading achievement at the school has increased from 36% to 59% of students at or above grade level, as per a midyear review of student data. Additionally, due to improved systems for monitoring attendance with reward incentives, student latenesses, which numbered 455 instances in September 2012, declined significantly by 50%, only three months later. All major constituents support this plan with ongoing monitoring and data-based adjustments to support student achievement. As a result, the school community recognizes a clear vision of the school's future development and works collaboratively with various supports and resources to help meet targets set to improve student learning.

- School leaders and staff model and convey high expectations to each other, as well as to students and parents, to reinforce the school's positive culture. (3.4)
 - Parents share many examples of the school's effective communication with families, including newsletters, translated documents, meetings for parents about relevant academic and social-emotional topics, and easy access to teachers. Ninety nine percent (99%) of parents on the 2012 School Survey agree that the school clearly communicates its expectations for children's learning and this sentiment is echoed by parents in person. Beyond quarterly report cards, the school issues quarterly progress reports that detail what the current units of study are in reading, writing and math, how students achieve in major subject areas, including science and social studies, and what four academic goals are set for the next term. Parents note that these progress reports "help us know how our child is doing before it's too late", which increases parents' awareness that the school holds high expectations for student achievement. Moreover, every teacher makes at least two positive phone calls home to parents of students in their classes, by the mid-year, in order to nurture the home-school connection and foster trust. Similarly, teachers affirm that school leaders expect a high degree of professionalism, collaboration, and consistent teaching practices. There is some tension with administrators around specific issues, such as standards for professional attire, but most teachers feel that school decisions serve the best interests of the children and support ongoing efforts towards school improvement. As a result, school leaders and staff collaborate effectively to share accountability for meeting increasingly higher standards of behavior and learning.

- School leaders prioritize the observation of classroom instruction and provide teachers with constructive feedback and supportive coaching that communicate clear expectations for practice. (4.1)
 - This year, school leaders have strengthened the process and format for giving teachers formal observational feedback, by providing a range of dates for possible observation, instead of a pre-determined date, thereby conveying the expectation that thorough instructional planning is necessary at all times. Additionally, after the observation, teachers reflect on their practice, in writing, and the administrator articulates a timeline for next steps to ensure greater support. Furthermore, there are far more frequent informal observations occurring, with low inference notes by the administrator, comments aligned to the Danielson Framework that push teachers' thinking further, and warm feedback a short time later. This focused attention to teacher development and observational feedback means that teachers understand expectations for effective pedagogic practice and, in turn, demonstrate improved consistency in implementation across classrooms. New teachers, especially, cite the regular and actionable feedback they receive as "clear" and "constructive." This endorsement of current observational feedback also reflects substantial resources that school leaders invest in having math and literacy coaches on hand for individualized and whole school professional development that includes regular examination of student work and data.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop math curricula and tasks that challenge students to think, write and problem solve at higher levels, so that they are better prepared for middle school and beyond. (1.1)
 - The school has adopted two math programs - *Math in Focus* for grades K to 3 and *Investigations* for grades 4 and 5 - that staff members researched and found more aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts, than prior math programs. However, only recently have teacher teams looked closely and together at math curricular tasks, including administering a baseline assessment for all students in January, reviewing results and student work, and modifying unit plans. Therefore, there is inconsistency in rigor of what students do and learn in math, with insufficient multi-step math problems that challenge all students at high levels, including students with special needs and English language learners. Moreover, an imbalance exists across classrooms between attention and time in flow-of-the-day schedules devoted to math versus literacy, including a 1:3 ratio of instructional time during daily lessons scheduled for math versus literacy and limited student work posted and placed in student folders in math compared with literacy. As a result, students' tasks and learning activities in math vary widely in quality and quantity across classrooms, which then dilutes math achievement school-wide.
- Sharpen teachers' capacity to support student-to-student questioning and discussion, in order to deepen student thinking and ownership of learning. (1.2)
 - School leaders use the Danielson Framework to inform teacher practice, with specific focus on planning, preparation, and questioning. Teachers share the belief that students learn best through cooperative learning. Therefore, small group and partner learning are evident across classrooms, with good examples of differentiated supports for all learners. For instance, fourth grade students in one classroom rotate through learning stations in small groups and analyze different primary sources about life in New Amsterdam. Together they draw inferences from reading maps, paintings, and journal entries about colonial life in America, and the varied media then helps students with multiple learning styles to engage actively in the discussion and analysis. While this and many other lessons have good routines in place for small group cooperative learning and discussions, there is a reliance on the teacher to mediate the discussion and push students' thinking. Teachers' questions are often open ended, which then encourages high level responses, yet there is little evidence of students deepening their thinking by questioning each other or building on comments made by peers. As a result, some discussions remain teacher directed, which then hampers students from taking ownership of and accelerating their learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Robert Simon Elementary 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