

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 115 Alexander Humboldt

Elementary

**586 WEST 177 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY, 10033**

Principal: ANGELA RODRIGUEZ

Dates of review: November 28 and 29, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Nunez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 115 Alexander Humboldt is a/an Elementary school with 674 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 0.9% Black, 97.3% Hispanic, 1.5% White, and 0.0% Asian students. The student body includes 36.5% English language learners and 9.8% special education students. Boys account for 52.2% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47.8%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 85.52%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is Developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes informed organizational decisions regarding the use of time, funding and resources to promote improvement in student outcomes. (1.3)
 - Sets of non-fiction guided reading books in English and Spanish have been purchased in order to support literacy development of struggling readers. Classroom libraries have also been purchased to support non-fiction units that have been added to curriculum maps in order to align to the demands of the common core standards. Additional programs for students who need academic intervention in literacy such as Quick Reads, Step Up to Writing, Fountas and Pinnel Leveled Intervention Program and Do the Math for math have been purchased. in order to support students at risk of not meeting grade level standards. The school wide goal of increasing the volume and quality of writing across content areas is supported by math materials to support teachers in embedding extended response word problems in order to help prepare students for the demands of the common core standards. The established science lab supports hands on experiential learning of key concepts in science to allow students to write about content learned. As a result, the school has made progress in increasing the volume of student writing across content areas as evidenced by student work displayed on bulletin boards and student work folders.
 - Hiring decisions are made by a committee of teachers and administrators who have established criteria for evaluating candidates to assure that candidates are reflective of their practice and responsive to students in order to support the school's goal of supporting the individualized needs of all students. Observations, results of standardized exams, analysis of reading levels and interims assessments are used to assure that teacher talents are maximized by strategic class assignments. Intervention plans reflect analysis of standardized test results and formative assessments in order to target specific skills of sub-groups of students resulting in grade level action plans that are shared with classroom teachers and support staff. Instructional lead teachers for each grade levels, as well as for ELLS and SWDs, have been identified in order to support teachers in the continuous review of student achievement data and monitoring of instructional plans that meet the assessed needs of students. Lead teachers work with teacher teams as well as with individual teachers to assist teachers in executing school goals of providing rigorous instruction aligned to the common core standards that provide various entry points to help meet the needs on individual and subgroups of students. Discussions with teachers indicate that collaborating with colleagues during teacher team meetings and working with lead teachers has enabled them to develop a common lens regarding expected student outcomes and improved communication among teachers as evidenced by results of the learning environment survey.

- The school gathers and analyzes formative and summative assessments to identify trends in student achievement in order to inform instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - The school collects and analyzes monthly reading levels, reviews running records, baseline assessments in math and end of unit tests to track student progress and inform instructional plans. The school uses the Teachers College benchmark assessments and end of unit tasks to measure progress in literacy. End of unit tests and self-assessment inventories in math provide data regarding the achievement trends of individual and groups of students which drive the composition of small groups in order to provide targeted instruction as evidenced by review of intervention and lesson plans. For example, after a math mini-lesson students were directed to work independently on identifying addition and subtraction patterns, others to remain on the rug area with the teacher to review basic subtraction facts and the rest to work with the English as a second language teacher to review key vocabulary introduced during the lesson to support their needs.... End of unit tasks in ELA and math are assessed using common rubrics, focusing on non-fiction reading and writing and extended responses in math are used in order to measure growth towards proficiency. Teacher developed checklists aligned to unit goals are provided to students to support completion of interim tasks and to gauge student progress towards end of unit benchmarks. Review of student work leads to the development of instructional strategies such as providing student with prompts, student friendly checklists and templates to guide students in the development of essays to support students throughout the unit. Students who demonstrate that they need support in developing voice are given a different version of writing checklists and graphic organizer than those that need to improve on organization or the use of descriptive language in order to support the individual needs of students. This allows the school to track progress and adjust instructional plans for the current unit and subsequent units in order to assure that units of study adequately prepare students to meet grade level standards. Thus these practices ensure a consistent approach across all classrooms to evaluate each lesson, check for understanding and make immediate and purposeful adjustments to support student learning.

- Administrators have established cycles of observations, providing teachers with feedback aligned to a teacher effectiveness framework, in order to improve teacher practice. (4.1)
 - The school uses the Danielson Framework for teaching to help focus its efforts to improve teacher practices. Cycles of observations begin with teacher self-evaluation of the target competency in order to create a baseline, assess growth and inform professional development plans for individual and groups of teachers. Review of observations surfaced the need to support teachers in planning and preparation and as a result improvement plans involving the Network and Teacher's College consultants were executed to support teachers improve in this area. Each cycle consists of three to four short observations within an eight week period, with verbal and written feedback provided to teachers in order to support improvement in the targeted area. The administration also schedules teacher inter-visitations so that they can provide each other with feedback and support in the implementation of teaching strategies.

Interview with teachers indicate that they have been provided with helpful feedback from administrators and colleagues, resulting in improved confidence in planning based on data to meet the needs of their students.

- Feedback to teachers is directly related to the identified Danielson's competencies targeted by the school, including strengths and challenges to support teacher development. Next steps are provided in order to delineate a plan of action for improvement. The administrative cabinet reviews feedback provided to teachers in order to plan professional development for individual and groups of teachers. Instructional lead teachers are also employed to support teachers in developing identified skills by providing demo lessons for colleagues, engaging in book clubs and collaborating with Network and outside providers in order to plan and execute professional sessions that address the needs of staff as evidenced by professional development plans and agendas. For example, teachers expressed that the support provided by in house staff developers and Teachers College consultants around the implementation of shared reading and writing has improved their capacity to effectively model for students target skills such as comprehension and supporting claims using text based evidence resulting in improved student writing.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the rigor and coherence of the school's implementation of the curriculum in order to assure that students are adequately challenged and make progress towards meeting grade level standards. (1.1)
 - Teams of teachers meet weekly to analyze curriculum units and plan rigorous tasks related to reading and writing for informational purposes, formulating opinions and essays? to assure that students are engaging in activities related to grade level standards in literacy. The school has also closely analyzed the math curriculum to assure that it aligns with the instructional shifts, and includes problem solving in math to support a deep understanding of key grade level concepts. Review of curriculum plans indicate that teachers have planned strategies and multiple entry points to scaffold activities to support student subgroups who are struggling with content in order to assure that all students have access to the same rigorous tasks. However, across classrooms the tasks that are being implemented are not sufficiently rigorous and as a result all students are not being challenged as evidenced by classroom observations and interviews with students.
- Improve teacher pedagogy to assure that students are provided with a variety of entry points to the school's curriculum in order to increase engagement and higher order thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers implement mini-lesson, followed by individual practice or small group instruction to provide support for targeted students. Teachers plan teaching points and model the target strategies for students and plan activities to allow students to practice the strategy taught. In math teachers also implement a workshop model, enabling students to engage with content through whole class, small group and individual activities in an effort to meet the needs of all students. However across classrooms, teaching points are not clear and

explicit and phrased in language that is comprehensible to students. Furthermore independent activities do not always match the teaching point, resulting in students who are not always engaged or challenged by the content being taught.

- The school schedules monthly data meetings to ensure that teachers plan small group instruction based on student needs. Teachers use results of running records, end of unit exams and analysis of writing tasks to group students in order to address academic needs. Across classrooms there is evidence that students are grouped for small group instruction in order to provide additional entry points for struggling students as evidenced by lesson plans and intervention plans. However, the implementation of such plans do not always lead to supporting students at various levels in order to understand concepts deeply and the language of instruction used does not always correspond to the level of acquisition of the make- up of the class and as a result some students do not have access to key concepts taught by teachers.
- Increase the effectiveness of teacher teams in order to further promote the collaborative analysis of student work and improve the capacity of teacher to address student needs. (4.2)
 - The schedule allows for teachers to meet weekly during the school day and for an additional fifty minutes after-school in order to collectively analyze student work and make instructional decisions that will lead to improved student outcomes. Teacher teams use results of standardized exams, running records, result of end of unit tasks to gauge student progress towards grade level goals. Teachers collectively review student work to surface trends and plan next steps. They have assigned roles to help facilitate and complete items on the agenda. However, the analysis of student work is still not fully grounded in the rubrics developed and as a result their work does not yet lead to tasks and instructional strategies that are sufficiently rigorous and challenging for all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 115 Alexander Humboldt	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