

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**John L. Bernstein Elementary School
01M137**

Principal: Melisa Rodriguez

Dates of review: April 30-May 1, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 137 John L. Bernstein is an elementary school with 230 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 25.0% Black, 54.0% Hispanic, 3.0% White, and 18.0% Asian students. The student body includes 15.0% English language learners and 24.0% special education students. Boys account for 48.0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52.0%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers engage students to a great extent with differentiated instruction and discussion protocols that motivate them to do their best. (1.2)
 - During instruction, teachers routinely incorporate student choice and different modalities that lead to high student interest, especially in their protocols for Gallery Walks of showcasing student work and discussion format of Grand Conversation and Math Congress. For example, fourth grade students brainstorm with peers different literary essay ideas, while students in science classes measure spinning tops to predict and experiment with which will spin the longest. There are sufficient supports, including graphic organizers and interactive notebooks, for struggling learners, with some extensions for higher achieving students. Classroom instruction consistently follows a workshop model approach, whereby students spend much of their time working in small groups, pairs or independently. Students engage thoroughly in their learning tasks and speak excitedly of favorite projects, such as persevering on challenging problems-of-the-week in math. As a result, there is a positive buzz and meaningful student work from students participating in discussions and demonstrating higher order thinking skills.
- Teachers use a broad range of assessment tools to reveal student strengths and challenges and support their efforts to individualize instruction. (2.2)
 - The school implements Teachers' College reading and writing units in literacy and math curricula that combines *Everyday Math* and *Context for Learning*. Teachers utilize the units of study to design and implement assessments and then track class and individual student progress in reading levels via running records, writing development from pre- and post-writing prompts, and math mastery of skills via monthly summary sheets. For example, on a grade 5 summary sheet for a persuasive writing task, the teacher notes what each student has done well and what specific area of improvement (such as focus, structure, elaboration, and craft) to work on next. This detailed and consistent approach to monitoring students' literacy development has improved the effectiveness of conferring with students and writing processes. In math, students complete problems-of-the-week as ways to practice multi-step problem solving and they participate in Math Congress discussions, where they show and present different strategies to solve real world problems. Together, these written and oral performance task assessments provide teachers with a clear portrait of students' strengths and areas of need, which then leads to effective adjustments in instructional planning and targeted interventions.
- School leaders have articulated clear goals aligned to student and staff needs that are monitored to yield positive academic results. (3.1)
 - School leaders conducted a comprehensive needs assessment from student and teacher data, while staff contributed input into goal-setting, during team and faculty meetings. Together, administrators

and teachers have formulated school wide goals and engaged in professional development around expanding student talk in learning, nurturing a more positive school culture, and increasing the consistency of effective teaching practices. This work has led to a concise and public set of targets incorporated in the Comprehensive Educational plan (CEP) with action plans that drive organizational and instructional decision-making. All major constituents support this plan with ongoing monitoring and data based adjustments to support all students. For example, with weekly expectations for Math Congresses and bi-weekly Grand Conversations, teachers have become adept at transcribing students' oral participation and then tracking growth in this area. Then, teachers gauge student improvement in this key priority of increasing students' oral language participation. Updates on schoolwide goals are shared with the school community through minutes, monthly parent meetings and a weekly staff newsletter. As a result, the school community recognizes a clear vision of the school's future development and assists in coordinating various supports and resources that help meet targets set to improve student learning.

- School leaders consistently provide teachers with meaningful feedback from classroom observations, leading to improvement in pedagogical practices. (4.1)
 - This year, school leaders strengthened their process and format for giving teachers feedback from informal classroom observations, by including a transcript of the lesson, giving teachers an opportunity to reflect in writing on their practice, and aligning comments with the Danielson Framework so that teachers know suggested next steps. Furthermore, teachers now set pedagogic goals via one to one meetings with the principal, reinforcing the school's overarching goals and individual competencies connected to a research-based framework for teaching. Teachers cite the extensive, regular and actionable feedback they receive as "fair," "clear," and "constructive." This endorsement of current observational feedback means that teachers understand expectations for effective pedagogic practice and, in turn, demonstrate improved consistency in implementation across classrooms. For example, an analysis of formative and formal observation data, as seen in written reports and evident in classroom visits, indicates growing competency among teachers in using leveled questioning and turn-and-talk strategies to engage students in meaningful discussion, thereby moving the school toward reaching its overall goals. Moreover, administrators and grade-level instructional leaders analyze data from observation cycles and student achievement outcomes, in order to plan relevant workshops, intervisitations, and professional development.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop curricula and tasks that challenge students to think, write, and problem solve at increasingly higher levels, so that they are better prepared for middle school and beyond. (1.1)
 - Teachers follow Teachers' College reading and writing units of study, with a special focus on shared and guided reading in early grades. In math, teachers have worked with a consultant to revise their *Everyday*

Math units, incorporating more opportunities for students to do multi-step investigations. In fact, they have produced a useful document that bridges *Everyday Math* with *Context for Learning*, which helps ensure that students develop both procedural and deeper understandings of math problem solving. Therefore, year-long curriculum maps are solidly in place in math and English language arts, with thoughtful decisions about integrating Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts into units of study. There is a new partnership with the New York Historical Society, that has great potential to deepen students' learning of history and making connections across content areas to higher levels, but this initiative is in the early stages of development. Currently, maps do not exist for social studies and science. Instead, each grade level has a one page pacing calendar of social studies and science topics, but these lack sufficient detail, since there is no mention of teaching points, assessments, texts and materials, or extensions and supports. As a result, this weakens the effectiveness of curriculum maps in guiding instructional planning to improve student achievement across all subjects and grades.

- Continue to cultivate a respectful learning environment to expand the range of support services that are implemented to accelerate growth in academic and social emotional development of all students. (1.4)
 - The school succeeds in knowing each student well, as teachers and students have positive rapport in small class settings, which leads to a stable 92% attendance and a safe, inclusive school environment. Moreover, students have good opportunities to reflect on core values through shared readings of books-of-the-month. However, there is eroding trust in administrators, by teachers who are frustrated about how discipline and daily functioning of the school are addressed. For example, nearly 80% of teachers reported in the School Survey that they do not get sufficient help to address concerns about student misbehavior. Several recent initiatives are underway to improve school climate, including the launch of an advisory-type student council last month, and this month's kick-off of a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program. While staff point to thoughtful professional development around implementing these initiatives, it is too early to know the impact of these efforts on student outcomes. As a result, social emotional learning supports are not yet adequate or effective in maximizing learning for all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: John L. Bernstein Elementary	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