

# **Quality Review Report 2012-2013**

**P.S. 149 Sojourner Truth**

**K-8 03M149**

**41 WEST 117 STREET  
MANHATTAN  
NY, 10026**

**Principal: Barbara Darrigo**

**Dates of review: March 7-8 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Ilene Altschul**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 149 Sojourner Truth is a/an K-8 school with 383 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 63% Black, 26% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian students, and 9% other. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89.9%.

### Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School staff is beginning to develop Common Core aligned units emphasizing key standards and the citywide instructional shifts to increase rigor and student achievement. (1.1)
  - The school reviewed the city's Core Curriculum units of study and teachers are working collaboratively to review and plan units for implementation. All students are engaged in two common core units in both English language arts and math. Teachers post the Common Core aligned units on Atlas Rubicon, a web-based curriculum management tool for curriculum mapping, so that the school community has access. There is a shift to increase non-fiction reading and writing across all content areas. In a second grade class, the teacher is piloting a unit on Immigration, incorporating a variety of materials such as reading passages, read aloud text, a world map, graphic organizers and video clips. Students complete graphic organizers and are writing about what they learned about immigration. The teachers review the vocabulary from the unit so that students have increased access to more complex texts. In mathematics, teachers are focusing on unpacking word problems to increase students' understanding and application. In a fourth grade class the students are solving multi-step word problems to apply and demonstrate their understanding of estimation. Through team meetings, teachers are reviewing student work and tasks to determine alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and to ensure that tasks are engaging to all learners. As a result teachers are beginning to design more rigorous, challenging units to increase academic outcomes.
- The school has created a safe and respectful environment and is beginning to establish systems to support the development of effective academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
  - School leaders identified developing school culture as a primary focus over the last year and as a result, there has been an improvement in the tone of the building as indicated by the learning environment survey. The school has implemented a Positive Behavior Incentives and Support (PBIS) program which is monitored by a PBIS team. Staff receives professional development and the PBIS team checks in with the teachers to determine the number of students that are receiving positive feedback. Students are able to recite the schools' character pledge: to "be respectful, responsible and safe" which is displayed throughout the building. Students receive "caught" cards for positive behaviors. Incentives reward the students who have earned the identified number of cards needed for the month. The school partners with Peacemakers, where interns from the Harlem Children's Zone work as teacher assistants in every classroom to develop a rapport with the students and assist them academically. The School Based Support Team (SBST) meets twice a month to address the social-emotional needs of students and are available to provide at-risk services such as counseling. Students state that if they are having a problem they feel comfortable going to the principal, assistant principals, teachers, or Peacemakers. Parents state that the school is working to create a positive environment and that school staff communicates with them through workshops and meetings about grade expectations, CCLS and their child's progress. Parents and students expressed that bullying is a problem. In response, the administration brought in the "Stomp Out Bullying" program, resulting in improvement. The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), a community based organization, provides social-emotional support in addition to

academic and enrichment afterschool programs. Geoffrey Canada, president of HCZ, utilizes his resources to increase family engagement to attendance at workshops providing babysitting, refreshments and resources. In addition the school has a partnership with the Harlem Lacrosse and Leadership (HLL), a youth organization that builds leadership skills and social responsibility through lacrosse. As a result of the school's commitment to improving school culture, the students now have the resources to develop effective academic and personal behaviors.

- Through an inquiry approach, teachers are engaged in professional collaborations, developing distributive leadership structures, and increasing instructional capacity. (4.2)
  - Teacher team meetings provide a structured opportunity for professional conversations across grade bands. Teachers in pre-kindergarten through grade two, grades three and four, and five through eight collaborate two times a week, where they focus on the CCLS. Teachers state that they rotate leadership roles and responsibilities of a lead facilitator, time keeper, or recorder of minutes during each meeting. During team meetings, teachers analyze student work and identify evidence of current student thinking, what is needed to build upon current levels, surface gaps between performance and expectations, and implications for further instruction and teacher practice. The pre-k - grade 2 team focused on writing and the conventions across grade levels using the CCLS to guide their work. The grade 5 - 8 team analyzed students' ability to cite evidence from a text to support an argument within the Word Generation program. During this meeting, teachers identified the gap of citing evidence and discussed strategies to support learning such as an outline or graphic organizer to assist students along with further instruction on identifying evidence. As a result of these professional collaborations, teachers are analyzing student work, and discussing strategies to strengthen their capacity to improve their instructional practices.

## **What the school needs to improve**

- Improve teacher pedagogy to provide multiple entry points into the curricula with challenging tasks to engage all students in higher-order thinking and discussion. (1.2)
  - Amongst teachers there is a developing belief that students need to be engaged in high level questioning and rigorous tasks where scaffolds support all learners. Teachers believe that students learn best through a multi-sensory approach. In one team meeting teachers state that to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners, prompts such as sentence starters, or visuals, graphic organizers, drama, or music support learning. In another team the teachers expressed the need for tactile learning through the use of manipulatives and dividing students into small groups. However, these practices were inconsistently observed during classroom visits. Although all students were engaged, there was an uneven level of student participation. In a fifth grade class all students were partnered for support but many struggled. In a second grade class most students used a graphic organizer to assist with their writing. In several classes students were heterogeneously grouped, working on the same task with the high achieving student tutoring those that were struggling. As a result of teachers inconsistently providing supports and the undemanding requirements of evidence that learning tasks required, not all students were challenged, limiting students' academic progress.

- Develop common assessment practices and ongoing checks for understanding in order to provide students with feedback and make curricular adjustments to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
  - Teachers are beginning to use data gathered from the administration of running records, Acuity, and end of unit assessments, to determine students' achievement in reading. This data has provided limited feedback to students as seen on student work products, and there is insufficient evidence that the achievement information leads to curricular and instructional adjustments. Teachers gather results from various assessments and organize them in data binders by class. The majority of classroom visits did not reflect the use of this data for grouping or modifying instruction to meet the identified needs of students. For example, students were grouped based on "high and low performance" as determined informally by the teacher. Learning task for all students were identical. Teacher teams are not able to identify trends for student performance across the grades or specific subgroups within classes. In addition, assessments, or checks for understanding by teachers, during lessons, to monitor student understanding are inconsistent. For example, in an eighth grade math class, the teacher only checked for completion of the worksheet students were to complete, stating that he reviews their work after class to determine the need to reteach the lesson the next day. In a fifth grade class the teacher used a clipboard intended for taking conference notes but stated that all the students understand and does not record any noticings. The principal states that teachers are using questioning or exit slips to assess students' understanding but this practice was not observed. As a result of a lack of consistent practices for applying assessment data, teachers are limited in their ability to make effective adjustments to instruction in order to meet students' needs.
  
- Develop structures and processes to evaluate, monitor and adjust instructional practices with particular attention to the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards to meet students' learning needs. (5.1)
  - Although the principal states that the cabinet meets regularly to discuss and review the progress of students and teachers' instructional practices, there is no formal structure to monitor effectiveness of curricula and pedagogy. At the teacher team meetings curricula is developed and student work is analyzed. An administrator often attends these meetings or reviews the minutes to determine next steps. Follow-up is conducted through class visits. The principal states that the administration observes evidence of the work of the teacher teams and the CCLS expectations, but she has not yet developed a formal system for monitoring or tracking performance and progress. Student data such as benchmark assessments and reading levels are collected and reviewed but there is no formal data collection schedule or evidence of practice that adjustments are made as a result of this analysis. Although all teachers receive frequent observations, not all are documented in writing. As a result there are no systems in place to make adjustments to the curricula or is there a plan of action for developing teacher practice in order to increase student achievement.
  - School leaders address the school tone through a positive behavior intervention and support program (PBIS) and behavioral initiatives and community partnerships support student learning. However, there is no structure to evaluate the quality of the programs and supports, or whether the focus on the higher expectations of CCLS is being communicated with the school community. Although the PBIS team is responsible to monitor the frequency of teachers' giving "caught cards" and determining whether there has been an impact, the administration was not able to provide any

specific data as to the effectiveness of this program. The principal was unsure as to which teachers were participating, or whether support programs improved student performance. In addition, administration was unable to determine whether all teachers complied with an expectation to impart lessons to support the Respect for All week initiative. A culture for learning is “messed out” by the principal, but the expectations are not memorialized in writing, or are there explicit processes in place to determine compliance or impact. This lack of recorded data to evaluate the impact of structures and programs on the school culture prevents adjustments to support the higher expectations of the CCLS.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 149 Sojourner Truth	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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						
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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					
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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						
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed