

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Talfourd Lawn School

Elementary School Q050

**143-26 101st Avenue
Queens
NY 11435**

Principal: Rina Manjarrez

Dates of review: February 13-14, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Talfourd Lawn School is an elementary school with 783 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 30% Black, 40% Hispanic, 2% White, 14% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 14% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Expectations for delivering a rigorous curriculum are well supported by curriculum maps that include progress-monitoring checkpoints. (1.1)
 - Based on the recommendations from last year's Quality Review to "ensure that students continue to be challenged through rigorous and coherent curriculum to support rigorous performance aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)," one of the school goals is, "to engage students in literacy and writing tasks across disciplines with a focus on information and argument writing." Teacher teams revisit and revise the two CCLS tasks and units in each content area during weekly meetings as prescribed by the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) to ensure that they are appropriately aligned and rigorous. After analyzing post-assessments, teachers noticed that many students were unable to complete the writing portion. In order to increase students' stamina, teachers began administering on-demand writing assignments at the middle and end of each unit. Teachers use data from these assessments to adjust instruction, and they also embed mini-tasks in preparation for the final CCLS tasks so that students develop informational argument and narrative writing skills, as well as strong habits in math. As the practice is vertically aligned and aligned to the CCLS, it helps students across grades and subjects progress towards post-secondary readiness and results in focused attention to support student mastery.
 - To make sure that the curriculum maps emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, administration created a curriculum map template. The template ensures that all maps include elements such as Essential Questions, the chosen CCLS, Skills, Teaching Strategies, Unit Vocabulary, Small Group English language learners and students with disabilities Strategies, and Depth of Knowledge thinking. Curriculum maps also include Anchor Maps that teachers can use as well as relevant pedagogical articles. All of the units of study in all subject areas align to the CCLS. In addition to the two units of study required by the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), the school embeds open-ended questions to all tasks in order to engage all students deeply. In English language arts, students engage in activities that require them to read complex text closely and to cite textual evidence to support their thinking. In math, the school has aligned the units of study to the citywide scope and sequence, which allows different grades to go deeper around the major work of the grade, such as problem solving activities and constructing viable arguments. These practices ensure that the entire community is aware of each unit's connection to the CCLS.
- Relationships across the school are warm and inclusive of students, teachers and parents who feel valued and take pride in being part of a school community that supports their personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - The school's student government is made up of grade 4 and 5 students who provide a monthly forum where other students can raise problems and questions that are then discussed with administration. They also are

responsible for organizing events that promote school spirit such as Mustache Day and Pajama Day. The school's theory of action is that if students are engaged in meaningful learning experience and are nurtured socially and emotionally, then the students will become responsible citizens, creating a safe and inclusive environment for all. As such, in addition to their core studies, students are engaged in arts learning and have opportunities to explore, experiment, problem-solve, think critically, take risks and create as an artist and/or performer appropriate to their age and development level. This results in an environment that supports the social-emotional needs of the students while cultivating school pride.

- The school has strategic partnerships with a number of organizations to promote academic and personal growth among its students, including Move to Improve, Lincoln Center, the Historical Society, Dancing Classrooms and the Cook Shop program, sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture. This last program introduces students in kindergarten through grade 2 to healthy foods. Students also gain domain specific vocabulary as they read procedural texts in the form of recipes and informational texts on a variety of nutrition-related topics. The related Cook Shop Adult program reinforces what is being taught in the classroom by providing adult workshops on cooking, nutrition and budgeting. Since developing these partnerships, there has been a substantial decrease of student safety incidents, bullying incidents and an increase in student attendance. Students and parents appreciate the range of offerings that foster academic and personal development.
- The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations through annotated displays of student work with guiding comments for clear next steps. (3.4)
 - Based on teachers' comments on the 2012 School Survey that stated "the principal didn't make clear to the staff her expectations for meeting instructional goals," administration now refers to the school goal as well as the CIE whenever giving feedback to teachers. In this way, the principal helps teachers to understand that the school's goals were not created in isolation. Administration also uses the 15 minutes observation, 10 minutes discussing what they saw and 10 minutes feedback model with the Danielson Framework to reinforce what was discussed with teachers to help improve their practice. The school has professional development for staff, faculty conferences and team conferences for additional training. A School Based Option vote allowed more time for teacher teams to meet, analyze student work, identify needs and find ways to shift teacher practice. Sign-in sheets, agendas, conversations, feedback and analysis create a culture of mutual accountability. As a result, there is a shared commitment to the school's high expectations and targeted goals around improving students' outcomes.
 - Based on a recommendation from the 2010-2011 Quality Review to "deepen methods of communicating information with students and families about students' learning needs, outcomes and progress toward meeting standards," the school created a progress report that is distributed three times a year. The principal introduced a sample in the fall to give the Instructional Cabinet, lead teachers and parents for their review to make sure that it clearly informed parents as to how their child was progressing in meeting the demands of the CCLS. They suggested

that the progress report be a “living document” to be changed once the student meets a standard. The report also contains the student’s reading benchmark level, performance task results and has been revised to allow space for parent feedback. Parents also receive a letter that informs them of the standard their child has to meet for every marking period. Parents shared that they are better able to help their children at home due to the variety of workshops they have attended and the feedback they have received. For example, the parents were very vocal with their concern about the demands of the CCLS. In response, the school provided a series of workshops on curriculum, standards, text complexity and test preparation. This supported a consistent message to families regarding expectations around the role they play in helping their children to advance. This has led to an increase in student achievement from the 2010-2011 to the 2011-2012 performance tasks, which the school attributes to the relationships they have built with community members.

- The school is proactive in identifying and using additional funding sources and soliciting teacher input in efforts to improve teaching and learning. (1.3)
 - In order to align their goals with the CIE and the instructional shifts, the school has designated goals that teachers will use open-ended questions and improve students’ conceptual understanding of mathematics based on problem solving activities. To support these goals, the school allocated funds for literacy and math coaches who provide professional development around topics such as modeling with mathematics and realigning the math program to the CCLS. Teachers also work closely with staff developers from Teachers College to learn how to teach students to read texts closely and answer questions that are grounded in the text. Additionally, schedules with common planning time allow network support specialists to work with teams of teachers, specifically teachers of students with disabilities and English language learners, to help them meet their students’ specific needs. In order to help students meet the demands of the CCLS and to use technology and digital media strategically, teachers have been given iPads to enhance their lessons. One iPad application enables them to use SmartBoards to provide students with multiple entry points to lessons, another program allows students to dictate their thoughts for writing, and teachers also use their iPads to video themselves and reflect on their practices. This strategic use of resources promotes accountability and enhances school-wide goal attainment as evidenced in student portfolios that contain rigorous work.
 - By providing flexible programming to students with special needs, the school commits to pursuing success for all students. The school offers various program options, including special education teacher support services, full- and part-time Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) and 12:1:1 self-contained classrooms, which are all fluid and reevaluated frequently. For example, the newly created part-time kindergarten ICT class based on the turning five cases from last year has resulted in higher levels of achievement for students with disabilities and progress towards school-wide goals, as evidenced by math quizzes, unit assessments, on-demand writing, Teachers College assessments and performance tasks. A full time guidance counselor was hired even though the mandated caseload is only enough for part time. In this way, non-mandated students can receive counseling and the counselor can push into classes to do preventative programs. Teacher teams have reorganized their extended

day program to flexibly group students so they may partake in activities that meet their particular needs. These all help students make progress towards school goals, as evidenced by the fact the Tier I, Tier II, and flexibly scheduled special need students have shown an increase in both English language arts and mathematics as per data from the Teachers College Running Records assessment data and math unit assessments. In addition, there has been an increase in student responses to open ended questions in both English language arts and math.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a cohesive system to ensure that all teachers know their individual students' strengths and learning styles across the curriculum on an ongoing basis to support targeted instruction and foster task engagement. (1.2)
 - The School Self-Evaluation Form explains expectations for lessons “to reflect teacher’s knowledge of students and are designed with multiple access points so that all students have access to learning and students engage in rigorous learning experiences.” Although in most classrooms observed teachers provided students with multiple entry points into the curriculum, there are inconsistencies regarding how teachers use access points to scaffold instruction, to ensure that they reach their intended learning targets, which limits potential school-wide student growth.
 - One of the principal’s instructional goals for this school year was for teachers to incorporate various level 3 and 4 questions into lessons by utilizing the Depth of Knowledge rubric. However, teachers observed primarily asked students lower level recall questions and there was no clear evidence of how they create scaffolding for English language learners and students with disabilities, or how staff deepens the level of instruction to provide appropriate challenge, especially to facilitate higher-order thinking. Thus, it is unclear if the current strategies are setting a path towards mastery of skill and content for all students.
- Extend the good practice of using accurate formative assessments to accommodate different learning styles and to plan high level questions in order to maximize student learning. (2.2)
 - Even though teacher teams develop student checklists and rubrics, they are only used for performance tasks and end of unit tests. Through their curriculum maps, teacher teams have developed common end of unit assessments that are implemented throughout the grades and they use the school’s grading policy of marking student work on a 1-4 scale. However, student checklists and rubrics vary on homework and mini-tasks. This difference in rubrics prevents teachers from collecting meaningful information on their practice that could help guide them towards meeting all students’ needs and designing lessons that more fully engage students in the learning process.
 - There was evidence of student reflection in some of the school’s writing projects using the “student checklist form”. However, a student reflection section was not found in other examples of student work in other curriculum areas. This limits students’ ability to identify skills and strategies in order to promote student success.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Talfourd Lawn 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