

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Hillside School

Elementary School 054

86-02 127th street

Queens

NY 11418

Principal: Anita Prashard

Dates of review: May 9 -10 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Evelyn W. Castro

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Hillside School is an elementary school with 565 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 49% Hispanic, 5% White, 2% Hawaiian Pacific Islander, 2% American Indian and 33% Asian students. The student body includes 28% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and her instructional team make organizational decisions to further the school's instructional goals and support the needs of all students as evidenced in student work products. (1.3)
 - The school's instructional goals target improved outcomes for student with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELL) students. To this end, the school hired and reassigned teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) and special education teachers so that these teachers can target instruction particularly for these students. These specialized teachers push-in to classrooms or pull-out students for focused instruction. In addition, these teachers are an integral part of team planning for each grade and subject enabling them to share the responsibility for meeting the needs of particular groups of students on which teams are focusing. Additionally, a Saturday and after-school ELL Academy supports and enhances instruction for ELL students. These purposeful decisions result in improved student outcomes as evidenced in the student work products especially for these sub-groups.
 - Staff time is structured to give teachers on each grade, common planning time from 3 – 5 times per week. In addition, Professional Learning Community (PLC) Teams meet twice per week. As a result of a School Based Option, teachers now have an additional period per week dedicated to common planning; inquiry; articulation; and professional development. Team meetings observed provide evidence of ongoing work on Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks. Agendas and minutes reflected the progression in team discussions and the development of more challenging tasks. In addition, the instructional rounds and peer observations documented improved pedagogical practices based on teacher reflection documents. As a result of more rigorous tasks, there were improved student outcomes that is evident in data binders, Fountas and Pennell Benchmark Assessments, ARIS group data reports, pre and post assessments across grades. These adjustments facilitate the change of instructional strategies at the classroom and school level.
- School leaders and staff carefully create coherent and exciting curricula aligned to key state standards that are rigorous and engage a variety of learners. (1.1)
 - School leaders and staff developed the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) to align with State Common Core curricula expectations to close the achievement gap and promote college and career readiness. Interviews and documents reveal the school focus is to enable students to develop writing skills. Students improve their writing skills to support opinions and respond to complex written texts. For example, each grade completed two Common Core Learning tasks and units of study in English Language Arts (ELA). Lesson plans reviewed across all grades in ELA show the use of high levels of text complexity as quality non-fiction texts are at the center of each read-aloud lesson. Additionally, questions and tasks are text-dependent and text-specific. Students are asked to respond to the text being read by attending to the specific dimensions, concepts, ideas and details. Furthermore, in

response to the citywide expectations, the math curriculum has been aligned to CCLS in an ongoing process and is supported by the Math Cluster and Lead Teachers across grades to make sure that the identified shifts are addressed. The CEP reflects the focus on two math Common Core tasks at each grade level. The school has selected the GO MATH program which is CCLS-aligned and has identified the instructional shifts necessary to improve student learning on the key standards. As a result of these efforts, the school shows growth in improving the outcomes for sub groups including ELL and SWD students which is evident in a gain of 4 points on the most recent Progress Report in moving toward closing the achievement gap.

- Classes visited across all grades consistently emphasize critical thinking and rigorous tasks in ELA to cognitively engage all students including ELL and SWD students. Teachers observed across grades were using Acuity results to place children in flexible math groups for instruction. Math groups observed in grade four included using the four operations to solve problems of distance, intervals of time, liquid volumes, and mass of objects. Students were observed using “questioning wheels” to ask and answer questions at the higher order end of Blooms Taxonomy. Questioning wheels are used in all grades across the school. A student commented, “We are 5th graders. We do not answer basic questions. We must analyze and interpret information”. Classroom discussions and writing samples reviewed across all grades evidenced improved student outcomes in higher-order thinking skills.
- Ongoing assessment practices and grading policies facilitate curriculum adjustments and changes of instructional strategies at the classroom and school level. (2.2)
 - Creation and use of assessments and rubrics are evident across classrooms. Assessments used are noted in teacher observations and in teacher conference notes in order to give actionable feedback to students. Teachers shared ‘Glows & Grows’, a rubric aligned to the CCLS tasks and a method of telling students about the areas where they are doing well and areas for improvement. In turn, student work shows improvement. Furthermore, according to minutes of team and staff meetings, the impact of sharing assessments has increased cohesion across grades. Teachers are using pre- and post- unit assessments in science and social studies. Assessment tasks are embedded within units and are coupled with the use of Acuity assessments in ELA and math. A review of curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans over time show refined work products from improved collaboration and communication among teacher teams. This process which includes meetings, professional development, observations, and actionable feedback, has helped teachers to improve their questioning techniques and adjust curriculum at the classroom level and across the grades as evidenced by lesson plans and meeting notes reviewed.
 - Classrooms observed in grades 1 to 5 used consistent, common strategies to check for understanding. Methods observed were both formal and informal and include hand signals in the lower grades, stop and jots, exit slips, think-pair-share, slates/wipe-off boards pre and post unit assessments to help staff determine progress toward school goals and individual student goals. Additionally, student self-assessment is evident in classrooms. For example, one student in grade 5 stated that “he knows how to develop an argument for or against having a longer school day by using a rubric and

asking himself questions after writing.” He created a T-chart to record supportive argument points and counter-points. Teachers interviewed said they make adjustments to meet the needs of their students as evident in writing samples and additional writing topics from classroom binders show evidence of improved student outcomes.

- The hardworking principal and her team developed a vision for school improvement based on data which is understood and supported by the entire school community and tracked for progress (3.1)
 - Each group of constituents interviewed, staff, parents, and students articulate school-level goals and the vision for long range school improvement. Minutes of the principal’s instructional team meetings reveal that this group monitors progress toward school goals and adjusts the curricula accordingly to support student learning. Additionally, there is a specific focus on the classroom level due to the fact that a teacher from each grade is part of the instructional cabinet. These teacher leaders are a part of the grade /inquiry teams and the School Leadership Team (SLT) thus perpetuating an ongoing school dialogue. Furthermore, parents are kept informed through progress reports , workshops , SLT meetings and other areas of communication which have made the school community aware and active participants in improved student achievement .
 - A review of the data used by the school to set goals and create action plans includes conference logs, running records and benchmark assessments with definitive timelines. Additionally, formal and informal observations data informs school staff and leaders how well the impact that pedagogy has on student outcomes and what areas need to be revisited. These outcomes facilitate the change of instructional strategies at the classroom and school level. Changes include change in groupings or the type of scaffolding used with each child. Changes may also include differentiation of instruction or change of tier in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Student growth is monitored carefully as well, including student data regarding suspensions, attendance, and grade team meetings that record staff anecdotal notes. Based on a review of academic student data funding for a writing cluster has continued. The writing cluster models and reinforces teaching practices that support student progress in the area of writing. Professional development around the teaching of writing is an on-going process at team meetings which include the writing cluster and lead teachers; with the desired outcome of strengthening teaching practice to improve student outcomes. The impact on student outcomes documented includes evidence of increased stamina and quality of writing samples produced as evidenced in writing samples reviewed

What the school needs to improve

- Expand teaching practices that support beliefs adopted by the school and are informed by a common teaching framework and meet the needs of diverse learners. (1.2)
 - School leaders have invested time, and resources into professional development to improve teacher practice across all classrooms for diverse learners to have multiple entry points into the curriculum. In some classrooms that were observed, the questioning, differentiation and multiple

entry points into lessons for all students including ELL and SWD students are at a very high level and students are enthusiastic learners and make gains. For example, in one classroom, students were debating the longer school day as an ELL student led the discussion and children took turns responding and using persuasive dialogue and text from an article to support their opinions. However, there were several classrooms observed where the lessons are not challenging and whole group instruction and questioning does not provide adequate entry points into the lesson for all learners especially SWD and ELL students. This limits students' active engagement and hinders opportunities for higher order thinking and mastery of tasks for all students.

- Some classrooms display work products that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. Classroom observations reveal high levels of discourse among students who can manage their own discussions and debates on topics assigned which includes reviewing complex text in a most sophisticated way. However, in one or two classrooms observed the discussions were more teacher-dominated and did not reflect probing questions that would promote high levels of student thinking. Work products assigned in these classrooms did not maximize student participation and discussion. As a result of these students not having an opportunity to engage in high level discussions with scaffolded supports such as conversation stems, their ability to think critically and produce high level work products is hindered.
- Ensure that high expectations are conveyed to both students and families and ongoing guidance/advisement supports help students progress toward college and career readiness. (3.4)
 - School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to students and their families. The rigor of academic curriculum is emphasized by staff to parents and students. Parents are offered workshops on CCLS which help them to prepare students for college and career. Each grade has a service learning project which helps to build community among all stakeholders. These projects connect the students to the world of work and career as classes take trips to local colleges to see performances. According to parents interviewed, visiting local colleges helps to promote the idea of their children attending college in the future. However, the school does not partner with families to help both student and family to better understand and monitor his/her academic progress toward college and career readiness. This results in limited opportunities for student successes toward college and career expectations.
 - Students set goals for learning with their classroom teachers. Such as a goal shared in student binder by a second grader who wanted to be better at math problem solving. A fourth grader had a goal to improve in persuasive writing. There are events to celebrate students' learning such as assemblies to recognize student accomplishments and class presentations on curriculum projects. However, the guidance and advisement supports to prepare students for the next level are limited. Students were not necessarily aware or prepared for what to expect at the next grade level or at the middle school level. Presently there are part time counseling services in the school and therefore children do not have opportunities for a comprehensive exploration and preparation for articulation to middle school.

Thus, students and families who are limited in the knowledge about their choices for the next level are limited in their opportunity to succeed.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Hillside 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