

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Springfield Gardens
Middle School Q059
132-55 Ridgedale Street
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Carleton E. Gordon

Dates of review: February 11 – 12, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Springfield Gardens is a middle school with 666 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 95% Black, 4% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 10% 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 92.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers use a wide range of assessments aligned to the curriculum that result in a clear understanding of the performance of students and provide data that guides instructional decisions and inform planning. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams meet according to their subject areas of math, English language arts, social studies or science. They create rubrics to assess writing assignments and projects and streamline their grading by proficiency levels. The teams use common assessments, particularly at the conclusion of units of study, that are aligned with key standards as the school transitions slowly to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). For example, the social studies teachers decided to increase the frequency of writing assignments because the student writing showed limited stamina. While the school is still in the developing stages of using assessments to drive instruction, the strongest teachers on each grade, like the aforementioned social studies teacher, are using assessments effectively to adjust curricula. Evidence of its effectiveness was seen in eighth grade English language arts classes where teachers brought texts of increased complexity on which students based their written arguments with greater clarity.
 - In some classrooms teachers give generous attention to English language learners and students with disabilities using exit slips to determine their level of comprehension of the taught lesson. In other classrooms teachers walk around the classroom while students are working like the 7th grade class in which the 13th amendment of the constitution was being discussed. This purposeful walk included direct checks for student understanding. In some other lessons, students wrote reflections on their understanding of the material, like the 6th grade class with the lesson on dependent and independent variables. Teachers' practices inconsistently create space for student reflection. This has led to adjustments that meet the learning needs of some students. As a result, there have been some adjustments that have led to improved student outcomes, such as the 7th grade class where teacher lecturing previously dominated and student discussion was suppressed. As the teacher became more of a facilitator that utilized open-ended questioning, student conversation and comments increased as indicated in low inference supervisor observations.
- The principal has created a goal-oriented learning community that is focused on teacher practice and student outcomes with intentional strategies to accelerate learning. (3.1)
 - The school leadership has created a list of clear, directed school-level goals, including a goal to improve teachers' instructional practices and a goal to integrate the Danielson research-based framework. The instructional team uses a needs assessment and pertinent school data to improve teacher practice. The teachers then use the inferences from the information to modify what they do in the classroom. For example, student work indicated that students were unable to use text-based

arguments with a high level of coherence. The English language arts and social studies teacher teams devised strategies that included robust text-based discussions, challenging essential questions and monitoring student engagement in order to build their skills in this area. The ongoing processes for progress are explicitly discussed on the school leadership team where comments from parents and teachers are welcomed. Students are informed during assemblies why they must practice diligence and discipline with their work and study habits to improve. These changes in practice and improved communication with all members of the school community result in increases in the length of student essays and the connection of their ideas to the supporting details as measured by collaboratively-designed rubrics.

- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and benefit from the effective support they receive for their personal and academic growth. (1.4)
 - The guidance counselor and school leaders work closely with students and families to promote character education and support students' experience in middle school, including valuing student voice. For example, an assistant principal works with the student council to elicit student input and trains them to serve the school community in varied capacities. The students arrange assemblies and school functions, and they engage in peer tutoring and conflict resolution activities. The academy structure facilitates teachers knowing all the students in their cohorts by name and communicating regularly with their parents. The school offers workshops and assembly programs to combat bullying and promote balanced adjustment and respectful relating. Mentorship programs are supplemented by partnerships with the YMCA, Northshore Long Island Jewish hospital and law offices to build the discipline and confidence for college and career readiness. For instance, at the hospital, students learn how to be scientists by performing actual experiments. They develop habits of mind that include careful observations, diligent work ethics and teamwork. This has led to a more positive school environment where student learning can be more of a priority and student concerns are effectively addressed as measured by a double-digit reduction in reported incidents from the previous year.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide teachers with more direct and effective feedback and next steps from short frequent cycles of classroom visits using the Danielson teaching framework that supports teacher development. (4.1)
 - The school leadership attempts to support teachers with cycles of classroom observations that include looking at student work. These observations occur approximately every three months. Even though the feedback is connected to the research-based Danielson rubric and conversations are ongoing between teachers and their supervisors, the feedback is not consistently written down. Therefore, teachers forget the original pointers and revert to their previous practices. The network provides professional development on expectations and next steps, particularly as it relates to instructional shifts related to the CCLS.

However, teacher practice falls along a wide continuum, and professional development is not sufficiently individualized to reflect a repertoire of successful middle-school teaching strategies. As a result, improved teacher practice that can directly lead to continuous student progress is limited.

- Strengthen academic tasks to ensure that higher order thinking is consistently emphasized and reflected across all grades and subjects and result in a diversity of learners being cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - The school uses curriculum maps that support some rigorous habits and promote the teaching of standards-based lessons. The school has begun to implement CCLS-aligned tasks in English language arts, math, science and social studies. The staff downloaded material from the Common Core library and used it to develop essential questions. The leadership and faculty are currently deciding which standards to emphasize as they upgrade the quality of the tasks presented to the students. However, the analysis of student work needed to refine learning tasks that incorporate critical thinking is not an embedded practice across the school. Evidence of specific planning for student subgroups including English language learners, students with disabilities and high performers is not wide-spread across the campus. This limits opportunities for some learners to fully demonstrate their cognitive engagement across all subjects.
- Develop more effective teaching strategies across classrooms to include consistent multiple entry points for students in order to generate high levels of student participation and thinking in order to promote deeper learning. (1.2)
 - A majority of classrooms across the school provide evidence of some focus on key aspects of the math and literacy curricula, such as problem-solving, ratios, writing to inform, persuade and analyze using text-based evidence. Students are often seen working in groups based upon assessment data and teacher intention. However, tasks within these groups are often basically the same and frequently involve using worksheets, workbooks and very similar assignments. There is inconsistency in the rigor of student work products and the range of teachers' ability to generate questions that support critical thinking and deepen student engagement. Consequently, not all students' needs are currently being addressed, including those of English language learners and students with disabilities.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

| School name: Middle School 59 | 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 |