

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Forest Elementary School

Q071

**62- 85 Forest Avenue
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Katie Olivella

Dates of review: October 25-26, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S.71 is an elementary school with 982 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1.8 % Black, 50.7 % Hispanic, 43.0 % White, and 4.4 % Asian students. The student body includes 16.9 % English language learners and % special education students. Boys account for 51.6 % of the students enrolled and girls account for 48.4 %. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95.0 %.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Collaborative teacher teams use an inquiry approach that focus on deeper discussions about planning and learning resulting in improved teacher practice and student outcomes. 4.2
 - Analysis of literacy and mathematic shifts is central to the work of teacher teams. Curricula are being revised to collectively plan strategies to help individual and groups of students in meeting grade level goals. Additionally, staff voted in favor of additional team meeting time which reflects the school's strong commitment towards professional collaboration, shared learning and a desire for improved teacher practice school-wide. Staff are diligent about utilizing the inquiry approach to improve instruction, problem solve, and develop curricula aligned with the CCLS and key standards. For example, quoting accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and explaining how an author uses reason and evidence to support particular points in a text reflect key standards. As a result of the work of teacher teams, teachers have a better connection to new expectations so that planning and teaching is better aligned to educational rigor.
 - Data on the progress of students is shared with teacher teams which have led to a revision of units of study and tasks. Based on the Teachers College Narrative Writing Continuum Levels this work has shown movement towards progress as 67% of kindergarten students have moved to Level 2. The teams are reviewing student work in order to craft lessons towards the needs of English Language Learners. This will ultimately carve a path to improved student achievement, particularly with sub group populations.
- School leaders maintain a safe, inclusive and family-oriented environment that promotes learning and addresses student growth. 1.4
 - The administration and staff have created a safe and respectful environment that supports students' social-emotional needs and celebrates hard work. This year, guidance counselors developed lessons on character building that are presented during Town Hall meetings. Students report that these lessons on issues like bullying have helped lunchtime situations, which is also reflected in a 5% decrease in occurrences from last year to this year regarding improper behavior during recess. Parents are pleased that any problems or concerns are quickly resolved by teachers who are always available and approachable. As a result, an environment has been created where students, "look forward to coming to school, seeing their friends and learning".
 - Students are eager to share the "good rules" that are instituted throughout the school and maintain a sense of ownership and pride in following these rules. Students are recognized monthly for exemplary citizenship and perfect attendance. These celebrations have helped in improving attendance on a monthly basis by 2% since last year. In

addition, the attendance rate is currently at 95% allowing students and staff to deepen their focus on academic growth.

- The school's administration provides several venues for communicating high expectations to students and families in order to establish a culture for learning and improve student achievement. 3.4
 - School leadership provides workshops for parents that address college and career readiness topics in addition to social-emotional issues. A Parent Academy is in place for parents to become well versed in the Common Core Learning Standards and help guide children's learning at home. English classes for parents who are new to the language are also available. According to the 2011 Learning Environment Survey, 92 % of parents reported that "the school clearly communicates its expectations for my child's learning to me and my child" and 91% believed that "my child is learning what he or she needs to know to succeed in later grades or after graduating from high school". The school offers different ways of communicating expectations to parents. The most efficient one has been a monthly report where parents are able to respond to their child's progress and inquire about next steps. Teachers report that this "reciprocal" resource enabling parents to comment on learning strategies has shown a significant change in stronger homework practices amongst ELL students in kindergarten through grade 2.
 - Teacher teams monitor assessments on a monthly basis so that parents are well informed of their child's progress and goals. Parents receive information about how to help their children become stronger in meeting their personal goals. They are also kept apprised, through workshops and emails, of what their children will be learning in future grades and how to plan accordingly. Parents were proud that their school has a robust program for parents where supports and expectations have high priority and are conveyed through parent coordinator outreach, bi-monthly meetings, phone calls, e-mails, individual teacher meetings and reciprocal parent letters about goals. Furthermore, students posit that, "teachers push our brains to learn so that we can all get into good colleges". As a result, students whose parents have attended the Parent Academy workshops are excelling in reading comprehension and students with modifications in grades 3-5 are showing a better understanding of answering two and three part questions and applying strategies like breaking down words when reading more complex text.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the alignment of the existing curriculum to the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards in literacy and math instruction to increase rigor and higher order thinking. 1.1
 - The school attempts to use curriculum maps that implement standard based lessons with the desire to meet the diverse needs of the student population and raise their level of engagement, however, developing modifications to the curriculum to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners are inconsistently implemented across grades and subjects. As a result there are varied

recipes for learning which limits the ability for teachers on a grade to establish stable criteria regarding how students learn best according to their individual needs.

- Teacher teams are cognizant of planning goals to encompass the many needs of all students. Teachers are familiar with the citywide instructional expectations, but the shifts in achieving fluency, deep understanding and depth of intensity in mathematics where students are practicing and understanding what they learn are only beginning to emerge. Consequently, although some planning is evident to meet the needs of varying student sub-groups, students' academic tasks do not always incorporate critical thinking activities as lessons reflect teacher directed activities and whole group tasks. This limits the proficiency level of subgroups of students to grow as evidenced in student work and the school's Progress Report.
- Ensure that all students are actively engaged in rigorous tasks that offer multiple entry points and opportunities to create meaningful work products.

1.2

- Teacher teams are developing strategies in lessons that are aligned to literacy and math curricula vetted to the school's chosen key standards. The school has identified writing to convey information, opinion and narrative experiences as well as ascertaining the big ideas in non-fiction text in order to summarize and use critical thinking. However, the tasks developed in classroom lessons included citing a character's actions through a read aloud or rephrasing the main idea of a story, which inconsistently provides ample instructional opportunities to engage students in higher order thinking. This, in turn, leads to a disengagement of students and makes it more difficult to effectively close the achievement gap.
- Teachers are working on presenting a wider range of critical thinking skills for students. At this time, across classrooms, there are limited learning choices enabling students to respond to prompts that are more text dependent, reading and analyzing informational passages and discussing arguments and claims in order to think out of the box. Students comment that most work is easy for them and they have difficulty explaining which tasks took them time to complete based on the depth of the assignment. While some students are eager to participate, others are reticent and not encouraged to respond in the conversation. Furthermore, students' work products and classroom conversations do not reflect a connection to the key standards in reading and math that the school has chosen to focus on. As a result, all students are not being adequately exposed to deep thinking, questioning or activities that promote curiosity in order to support their development towards meeting grade level standards.
- Develop a common protocol for the use of on-going assessments and rubrics across grades to expand the analysis of student progress and adjust instructional decisions at the classroom level. 2.2

Although the use of summative and formative assessments to identify student performance levels is a practice that is emerging among individual teachers and teacher teams, at this time there is not a consistent and cohesive plan to create assessments that support an understanding of student mastery. Hence it is therefore a challenge to adequately adjust curriculum and instruction. This has resulted in the inability to determine which students are achieving their goals across grades and subject areas.

Teacher teams are working on developing tasks and rubrics to assess student progress towards meeting key standards with a focus on reading, writing and math. At this time students are uncertain about how rubrics can help them self- assess their work and create a path towards next steps of learning because rubrics are used inconsistently from class to class. In addition, the analysis of student work is at the initial stages of determining adjustments to units of study, curriculum maps and instructional strategies in order to be certain that students have exposure to grade level curricula. Students receive comments on their writing, but are unable to articulate next steps for improved learning. This hinders the school's ability to accurately assess students' needs in order to modify curriculum and assure students assess to rigorous material.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Forest Elementary 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