

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Catherine and Count Basie Middle School

**Middle School Q072
133-25 Guy R. Brewer Blvd.
Queens
NY 11434**

Principal: Omotayo Cineus

**Dates of review: March 19 - 20, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Catherine and Count Basie is a middle school with 851 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 72% Black, 12% Hispanic, 0% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Administration and teachers use a wide range of assessment data to monitor school-level needs, student progress and create intervention strategies when needed. (2.2)
 - Staff has created interim assessments in English language arts and math, which are given every 6-8 weeks. Science and social studies teachers carry out common assessments at the end of each unit. The assistant principal, who is also the school's data specialist, does the final analysis of the school data. All tests are scored using the Scantron Performance Series, a web-based program that enables educators to view the results immediately and provides a detailed analysis of student assessments including trends in student answers to determine where the student population is demonstrating challenges and success. With the Scantron outcome, teachers and administration collaborated on areas of challenge to reteach and readminister the in-house assessments to improve student understanding, mastery, and teacher instruction and test validity. This allows for an understanding and recognition of trends in students performance and tracking of progress around relevant areas of need throughout the school.
 - It is the school's expectation for every teacher to use exit slips for students in the form of a higher-level question. Teachers give a question to student upon their departure from class to assess what the students learned in that particular lesson. In addition, the principal has a created a graphic organizer which organizes teacher feedback and student reflections and responses based on the posted rubric in an effort to offer students information for growth and direction for future development. This ongoing feedback and the teachers' responses to each assignment provide students with a forum for dialogue with teachers around their own work. In one English class observed, the teacher utilized the Teachers College model of conferring with students as a method of keeping students informed and guiding their instruction. The written discussion between teacher and student also informs teacher practice, helping teachers to become more effective in making instructional decisions, resulting in improving student performance.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teacher practice with a clear focus on improving instructional practices. (4.1)
 - Based on the recommendation of the previous Quality Review to “use the observation tool to develop teachers’ goals and plans that reflect and support for their professional growth and the improved achievement of the students,” the principal purchased TeachBoost for administration to use as their observation tool. To collaborate with teachers in creating their professional teachers goals, administrators provide teachers with their observed instructional challenges and successes through the program, thereby helping them to give formal and informal feedback to teachers that are aligned to the Danielson Framework as well as teachers’ own identified goals, sent the same day as the observation via email. 100% of

the 68 teachers and teacher teams have already received at least two formal observations, including first year, tenure year and teachers who had received an unsatisfactory rating. Administration also has developed a system where they collect and examine student work collaboratively and review student portfolios while doing walkthroughs. Consequently, administration is able to make precise teacher performance evaluations and provide specific feedback that informs the quality of the teachers' work and offers next steps to improve their practice.

- Administration uses the data from formal and informal observations for professional development opportunities based on areas of need to increase teachers' skills. For example, at a teacher meeting, teachers were given writing assignments to review and share with colleague so that they could offer feedback as practice for improving both teachers' writing and feedback given to students. Also, within the special education population, teachers receive professional development and workshops on writing individual educational plans in an effort to improve student achievement and teacher practice. To support the ongoing work with teachers and the identification of areas for development, the school has incorporated Teacher College consultants, science trainers and the 100 Book Challenge assessments. The school also supports departmental, grade and cluster meeting times for teacher mastery of subject matter and improved instructional culture. Finally through discussions, the principal has ensured pedagogues are teaching in their license area in order to receive support both vertically (by grade) and horizontally (by subject). The principal has noted successes such as the Integrated Co-Teaching classes, teacher teams, grade cohorts and teacher leaders who are retaining and maintaining "best practices" in the school. These processes allow for a differentiated approach to assessing and supporting teachers at various levels, thereby creating effective and targeted pedagogical support.
- Staff conveys high expectations to students and parents, which impacts positively on student achievement. (3.4)
 - The principal's goals and expectations are manifested through various communiqués to staff members. The *Basie Bugle* is a weekly newsletter to staff, which informs them of pertinent information for that week. In addition, the principal emails all memos regarding teacher team work to the administrative team teacher member, who then relays the message to the other teachers through the weekly department and grade meetings. The principal also communicates to staff via Engrade, an online grading program, which sends the message to both the teachers' Engrade and Department of Education emails. Finally, the principal can also communicate to staff using TeachBoost. During staff meetings, grade conferences and subject area meetings, leadership reiterates the school's instructional lens, mandates and expectations to ensure there is staff understanding and input to the execution of these school-wide expectations. The principal believes the staff's suggestion are valuable and a method for teacher self-reflection and accountability. The staff's use and assistance in the development of universal forms such as student data collection, goal setting sheets, bulletin board rubrics and student feedback forms all support the collective vision and expectations communicated by the principal. Although the implementation of the

school's goals varies widely throughout the building, the school vision and purpose is understood and is evidenced by staff continuing to work collaboratively towards achieving the school goals in an effort to boost both student and school performance.

- At the parent meeting, parents expressed how satisfied they are with the way the school communicates the school's expectations, which helps them to guide their children toward a path for college and career readiness. They talked about how they love the Engrade online system because it not only publishes progress reports every six weeks, but it also enables parents and students to easily see all the upcoming homework, assignment scores, class grades and attendance. Parents can also communicate to their children's teachers using this system. The school also sends parents a monthly newsletter through the mail. School Messenger is a telephone communications service that the school uses to send announcements, school newsletters and district news to families via phone or text. Finally, parents noted how much they appreciated the various workshops that have been given this year at the Parent Teacher Association meetings, such as workshops on the CCLS, safety and attendance. As a result, there is a consistent message to families about the high expectations the school sets for their children and their role they can play in assisting their children to advance.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop coherence and alignment in the school's curriculum with the CCLS to ensure that all students make necessary progress in their learning. (1.1)
 - Currently, teams of teachers across grades and departments are working on developing rigorous curriculum. However, the school has yet to make adequate progress in this work. While departments were given and understand the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and the instructional shifts, they are relying on pacing calendars from either the EngageNY website or the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project. Teachers could not clearly explain the pacing calendar's alignment to the CCLS and their knowledge of those standards is also inconsistent across staff members. In addition, departments are not yet fully aligned vertically and horizontally to the CCLS. These inconsistencies limit teacher effectiveness and, thus, student growth.
 - Some classes offer higher-order tasks that challenge students, but this practice is not consistent across classes and student work observed in hallways and classrooms did not adequately push students' thinking. Even though the school's total population includes 13% students with disabilities and 6% English language learners, the academic tasks observed in classrooms did not reflect a diversity of differentiated tasks for those students. All students were involved in the same task with no evidence of scaffolding for learners with differing needs. These lessons do not ensure that all students are engaged or that their needs are being met, which hampers students' ability to fully participate in the learning process and limits their potential for academic growth.

- Improve the consistency of the differentiation of classroom learning activities to provide appropriate challenge aligned to the student's achievement levels. (1.2)
 - Currently, teaching practices vary widely across the school. Some teachers use data strategically to inform pedagogy and group for instruction, but the practice is not consistent across all classrooms. Lessons observed did not consistently reflect differentiation of modalities or a wide range of learning opportunities. In some classrooms, students were unchallenged and passive and some teachers articulated no or little use of data analysis to adjust planning and instruction. In one science class the students were in groups but students were working on the same project. Because pedagogy is inconsistent, some students experience rigorous classes that push their thinking and other times they do not. Therefore, there are missed opportunities for the school to employ strategies that set all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, on a path towards mastery of skills and content.
 - While students were observed being engaged in student discussion in the English classroom where they were interpreting high-level texts, this was not the case in another English class observed. Also, assigned tasks in most classrooms visited did not sufficiently produce higher-order work products across grades and department areas. Similarly, some student notebooks and work folders do not demonstrate sufficient evidence of tiered supports to ensure consistent progress for struggling learners. Consequently, there are uneven levels of student thinking and participation, resulting in missed opportunities for students to develop higher order thinking skills. (c)
- Extend the use of professional collaborations across all grades and departments in order to provide staff with valuable opportunities to strengthen instruction and raise learning outcomes. (4.2)
 - Despite the fact that all teachers are on department and grade teams, the inquiry process is not yet embedded in the work. During the grade 6 math teacher team meeting, teachers were observed analyzing student work without using a clear protocol, and the "norming" of student work using the common rubric varied widely even at this late time of the school year. The result is the absence of thorough investigations regarding student performance and pedagogical practices, thereby hindering the identification of information that can guide school improvement.
 - Based on the 2011 Joint Intervention Team Report and Recommendation of the New York State Education Department and the New York Department of Education, which recommended the principal to hire a full-time data specialist, the principal assigned that position to one of the assistant principals. She also made the United Federation of Teachers Teacher Center specialist a math coach and one of the English teachers a literacy coach. However, none of these positions are full-time and their assignments do not adequately provide support to staff members, thereby limiting the effectiveness of their input in school-wide support and decision-making.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Catherine and Count Basie	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