

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Belle Harbor School

Elementary – Middle School Q114

**134-01 Cronston Avenue
Queens**

Principal: Stephen Grill

Dates of review: January 10-11, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Belle Harbor is an elementary-middle school with 779 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 5% Hispanic, 90% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make deliberate organizational decisions related to student groupings, programs and teacher collaborations in order to ensure that students produce meaningful work products. (1.3)
 - The principal uses the school's limited funds to give budgetary priorities to ensuring that teachers are programmed to meet weekly on grade level teams enabling them ample time to focus on collaborative planning and addressing the specific needs of students. Another priority is the arts, which are aligned to the school's thematic-based instructional program and address the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Clubs, such as glee club, art, chess, sewing and sports, support the school's goals and academic program. A reputable after-school art residency serves students five days a week and effectively addresses the school's goal of educating the "whole child" while fostering their artistic development. Middle school students find these programs particularly rewarding as they help develop their art portfolios in preparation for high school exhibitions. Consequently, a review of student work reveals that all students consistently participate in reading music, engaging in outstanding musical performances and creating noteworthy visual art displays.
 - In order to strengthen the instructional program of students with disabilities, the leadership created additional integrated collaborative teaching classes. In previous years, Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) was the primary intervention service for students with special needs. For this school year, the school assigned special needs teachers to Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) classes to provide a more supportive daily comprehensive program for these students while maintaining one SETSS teacher. One SETSS teacher primarily pushes into general education, as well as ICT classes to support students with individualized education plans. During the small group meeting, students shared that while they know who the SETSS teacher is assigned to work with in their class, they like the fact that she also assists them in their work. As a result, students report feeling exceptionally supported and teachers share the responsibility for meeting the needs of all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, and the 2011-2012 progress Report indicates that in science, 100.0% of fourth grade students are performing at level 3 or 4.
- The academic and social growth of students is a major priority throughout the school; students feel safe and they are fully supported by adults in a respectful school environment, resulting in a harmonious atmosphere for learning. (1.4)
 - In response to the previous year's School Survey, the school implemented a Positive Behavior Intervention System. All students are taught anti-bullying lessons and adults conscientiously build a respectful school climate where students say they feel safe, and adults comment that the school "feels like one big family". Students articulate the three R's: I am Responsible, I am Respectful, and I am Ready to Learn. This credo is evident throughout the school on hall displays and observed in

classrooms where students treat each other respectfully and assist peers during small instructional groups. Parents agree that the social-emotional well being of their children is a major priority of the school, and they deeply appreciate the manner in which their children are cared for. Students share that they enjoy coming to school, and activities such as student of the month, counseling services and clubs celebrate and support them in their efforts to learn and do well. Further, students are able to identify key staff members they can go to for direct emotional and/or academic support and suggestions that they make regarding student activities such as dances and volunteer service are welcomed by adults. Dedicated teachers willingly use their lunch and other free time to tutor students, and counseling groups address students who require additional social and emotional support. As a result, interactions between students have improved, and this year's Occurrence Report data indicates that the number of infractions related to student bullying is 4 compared to 13 this same time last school year.

- School leaders communicate high expectations to students, staff and families that lead to a strong school culture and attention to student achievement. (3.4)
 - The leadership's high expectations are consistently communicated through the school's faculty handbook, grade meetings, staff conferences, walkthroughs and feedback to staff. Staff receives ongoing training in the common teaching framework and the leadership's daily public address announcements set the tone for the day by enabling staff to know the expectations established for adults and students, resulting in a cohesive staff that is mutually accountable for student learning.
 - The leadership's high visibility and daily greeting to the entire school community deepens the strong sense of community that already exists and enhances the message of high expectations to students and families. There are ongoing efforts to acknowledge students' academic accomplishments, such as the National Junior Honor Society. In addition, the school's on-line computer school message system provides twenty-four hour information to families about student performance and promotes the message of college and career readiness for all students. Consequently, there are high levels of feedback that support families' understanding of students' progress in meeting those expectations and this supports continued achievement by students. For example, according to the school's most recent Progress Report, ninth grade credit accumulation of former eighth graders in this school is 100% compared to 94% in the peer group and 80% in the City average.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop a clear and focused curriculum across all grades and subjects that consistently emphasize rigorous tasks in order to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - The school has identified writing as a key standard and addresses the CCLS through a third year reading program in the elementary school and through novel studies in the middle grades. The principal shared that debating teams are about to begin in grade 6, and in grade 8, Socratic

Circles, a discussion structure that emphasizes rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills, have just begun. However, the effect of these programs cannot be determined at this time. Also, instructional planning documents, such as curriculum maps and units of study across all grades and subject areas, are not comprehensive, nor do they follow a progressive flow of skills and knowledge or reflect rigorous instruction. For example, in grade 5, although math curriculum maps from the previous year are not rigorous, no adjustments to the maps were made for this school year. Grade 4 teachers create their own units of study and include academic rigor, such as higher order questioning. However, this is not evident in all grades and classes. Consequently, instruction across the school that cognitively engages all students, including students with disabilities, and embeds rigorous habits that improve students' critical thinking and promote college and career readiness is inconsistent.

- Strengthen pedagogical strategies that offer consistent multiple entry points to students to ensure that all lessons are sufficiently challenging in order to generate meaningful student work. (1.2)
 - Teachers across the school work with students in small groups. Students are encouraged to respond to questions within their small groups, with a partner or to the whole class. In a first grade class, students sit in groups based on the teacher's assessment data. Questions asked enable students to work out the problem on their chalkboards, share responses with a partner, then share out their steps taken to get to the sum of a specific number with the entire class. However, there was no evidence that across the school students are instructed based on their individualized needs using data that provides multiple entry points into the curricula so that all learners, including subgroups, are challenged and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills. Hence, teaching strategies do not consistently provide scaffolds and routines that constantly offer a deep understanding of lessons that result in well-crafted student work products.
 - In some classrooms, students are encouraged to think about the content of the lesson and share their thinking with peers through partner and group discussion. For example, in the grade 8 science class, students work in skills-based groups to compare and contrast humans and Neanderthals using text to drive the discussion. Students share their partner's responses and their own thinking about the content of the subject. In another classroom, grade 5 students work in small groups to solve multi-step problems in math and articulate very well their responses to the group. However, across classrooms, student work reflects uneven levels of student thinking and participation as observed in an early grade classroom where students received the same math lesson even though, based on how quickly they completed the task, it was apparent that some students had already mastered the skill. Some of the students completed the task so quickly that they began to discuss topics other than the math lesson while they waited obediently for the teacher to circulate to their table. Consequently, not all students participate in cognitively engaging tasks and discussion at their appropriate levels.

- Refine curriculum-aligned assessments, including rubrics and teacher developed assessments that enable the school to determine the progress of all learners, and adjust curriculum and instruction as needed. (2.2)
 - Teachers strengthen their skills to use and create common assessments that provide them with information regarding student performance in writing, reading comprehension and math. The leadership and teacher teams shared that most of the assessments used are derived from the school's reading and math programs. Benchmark assessments were administered mid-year in reading and math to students in grades 3 through 8; however, a glitch in the system prevents the school from obtaining the scores. Consequently, the school cannot effectively assess the progress of its students in order to establish patterns and trends in student learning. Rubrics with meaningful teacher comments serve as a guide to inform staff about students' growth in areas such as persuasive writing and next steps. However, while rubrics are used across the school, they are not used in a clear and consistent way. For instance, in a grade 8 literacy class, students receive a rubric score from a four point rubric that was translated into a percentage score. When asked to explain how a four on an essay translated to a 96%, students were unable to explain the two grades. Additionally, although teacher teams use a protocol to review student work, teachers across the school inconsistently use the information from their analysis in order to adjust curriculum and instruction. As a result, the school cannot fully determine if students are making enough progress towards the goals so that adjustments can be made to the instructional program.
 - Self-assessments, intermittent student questioning, exit slips and writing checklists are utilized in some classrooms in order to offer specific information about student performance in core subjects and support grouping for instruction. For example, in a grade 8 humanities class, students sit in small groups and engage in a tone analysis lesson using two texts, "The Catcher in the Rye" and "Slight Rebellion off Madison". An exit slip is used to assess students' learning gained in the lesson. However, while various forms of assessments are used in the school, the practice of using assessments to make effective adjustments to curriculum and instruction is inconsistent. Hence, the ability of teachers to effectively identify trends and make adjustments to their instruction in order to meet the learning needs of all learners is limited.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Belle Harbor 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