

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Joyce Keld Briarwood School

Elementary School Q117

**85-15 143rd Street
Queens
NY 11435**

Principal: Paula Cunningham

Dates of review: February 5 - 6, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Evelyn Castro

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Joyce Keld Briarwood School is an elementary school with 1,039 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 12% Black, 31% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2%, Hispanic, 18% White, and 37% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers and administrators articulate data-based rationales for school's key standards as evidenced by the exemplars developed at each grade level across all subjects. (1.1)
 - Acuity baseline end of year results revealed that students were not at standard-based mastery levels required in the previous grade. During the summer teachers developed curriculum maps using the New York City Scope and Sequence and aligned curricula to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). As a result, literacy is the focus for reading informational texts emphasized throughout the school, across subjects and content areas. After reading or listening to nonfiction texts or literature, students respond in writing. For example, students in science, social studies and English language arts classes wrote on-demand and published writing pieces. Student work in grades 3, 4 and 5 showed improvement over time, as evidenced in data binders containing formative assessments and work samples. Curriculum maps help teachers collaborate to focus instruction, highlight particular skills and scaffold student learning. Teacher planning within curriculum maps promotes student mastery and supports school efforts to prepare students for the next level and, ultimately, to be college ready.
 - Across grades and subjects teachers analyze student work, data results and teacher made surveys in all subject areas. Each grade has a grading policy binder created by teachers and administrators to guide grading. Data in English language arts includes conference notes, running records, performance task data, baseline Harcourt assessment data, and results from teacher made tests. Teachers discuss plans in grade team meetings, refine strategies and improve teacher practice, such as differentiating the ways students can present their understanding of concepts. Teachers, collaboratively plan Depth of Knowledge questions to assure a variety of voices and perspectives in the planning process. Additionally, math teachers in grade 2 require that students create graphs and tally responses to essential questions to ensure rigor in the instructional process. A social studies project on American History asked students to create a mural, a diorama and/or a written essay as a culminating project with varying instructional approaches providing multiple ways students may show their comprehension. During team meetings, teachers developed next instructional steps, pre- and post-assessments and Depth of Knowledge question stems to improve instruction for all students. A kindergarten Integrated Collaborative Teacher Team created a unit study about animals and planned detailed entry points in the learning experience about animals and habitats so that all relevant subgroups were challenged to higher-order thinking, resulting in a diversity of students cognitively engaged in academic tasks.
- Shared beliefs about how students learn best are informed through teacher team inquiry and data analyses using a common, research-based tool that helps teachers improve school-wide instructional practice. (1.2)

- Across the school, teachers express that students learn best through lessons that utilize the workshop model; a model that enables students to have mini-lessons followed by engaging small group tasks. Teacher belief is informed by school level discussions within the instructional cabinet, comprised of teachers and administration. Classroom visitations and lesson plans identify a teaching point and intended learning outcome. Teachers model lessons embedded in CCLS aligned units of study. In fourth and fifth grade lessons, students actively engage in discussions and turn-and-talk activities. For example, students in a fifth grade class participated in discussions regarding the testing of human products on animals. A student partnership, first wrote bullets from reading text to develop an argument for or against animal testing. During, “Turn and Talk”, each student took a different point of view, drawing upon evidence from multiple sources to inform opinions. Students also learned that writers sometimes describe the nuances of their arguments by using direct quotes and they carefully use sequence to build an argumentative discussion or essay. Turn and talk partnerships with opposite points of view and other strategies discussed and refined in grade team meetings are yielding improved instructional practices.
- Teachers ensure high levels of participation and engagement in student thinking and discussions. In one grade 2 class, the student-speaker holds a Popsicle stick to indicate the sole speaker and other students understand their role as audience to ask questions and record evidence. In a grade 5 class, teachers gave written feedback to students and then regrouped them for discussion according to specific skills needing improvement. Teachers used the small group meeting to reinforce the rubric and help children better understand what is expected of them. Some classes in grade 4 use flip cameras to video peers so they can self- or peer-assess. Students use the video recording to improve skills in accuracy, fluency and articulation during verbal responses to questions. The use of videos enhances opportunities for all students, including relevant subgroups to fully participate in the learning and take ownership of the product. Skill development such as analyzing a point of view, referencing specific text details, and comparison/contrast from multiple texts, shows student progress within fluency and articulation after viewing a series of class videos. This analysis demonstrated is promoting high levels of thinking and student engagement as noted during classroom visits.
- Teachers collaborate to create rubrics and assessments across grades, and analyze resulting data to inform targeted adjustments to instruction. (2.2)
 - The school’s strategic assessment plan aligns with instructional goals and prioritizes standards for the year. The assessment plan for this year includes utilizing Acuity, running record assessments, and pre- and post-assessments to focus instruction and improve student outcomes. The grading and homework policy binders were created by staff and included parent participation. These documents require teachers to use instructional rubrics, continuums and student rubrics to help students plan a task and successfully complete the work. Teachers share rubrics across subjects and grades for consistency. A classroom visit of a grade 5 math lesson was evident of a teacher working with a small group of students on an approach to solve a problem on measurement in cubic feet and provide verbal and written actionable feedback. During interviews, students expressed that rubrics help them know what is expected of them and how to improve their understanding and learning, thus gaining awareness of next learning steps.

- Teachers monitor student growth and comprehension in a number of ways as seen in classrooms and team meetings. Classes in grade 4 used exit cards, parking lots, one-to-one conferences, mid-class checks for understanding and teacher observations as formative assessments. For example, teachers in grade 4 team meetings adjusted curriculum maps based on observations and checks for student understanding to give students a different way to show their understanding. In this case a pictorial time line for a U.S. History project. According to formative assessment data, instructional practices have improved, leading students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to make progress toward mastery on Writing Standard 2, Speaking/Listening Standard 1 and Language Standard 6.
- Leaders make effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school aligned with instructional goals and student needs, and leading to student mastery as evidenced in student work products. (1.3)
 - School leaders use their resources to partner with Teachers College staff developers for English language arts, Aussie consultants for math professional development and i-Ready Program to improve learning outcomes for special needs students. In addition, school leaders are currently piloting the Envision Science Program as another potential partner. The City Council has given the school 75 additional computers that students use to write reports for English language arts classes, as well as research and problem solving in math. The school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) calls for improvement in reading, leading the school to assign teachers who have expertise in i-Ready literacy system to all relevant subgroups aligning the work to school goals. Computer-based instruction and specialized software enables staff to realize these goals and improve the work products for a diverse group of students as evidenced during classroom visits.
 - The school went through a truncation process that eliminated grade 6. This allowed for a redeployment of staff, focusing use of teacher skills on the needs of students in grades 1 through 5. Leadership reassigned staff to align their expertise to support the school's instructional goals. Several second language acquisition teachers and 3 reading teachers were given special focus in supporting students. Additionally, Response to Intervention (RTI) teachers, 2 math teachers and a special education teacher were assigned to push in and pull out groups of students and monitor student progress to improve learning. School results demonstrate that teachers successfully support and monitor students in accomplishing gains on the Early Childhood Achievement Matrix and running records. This reassignment of staff led to kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 revealing positive impacts on student outcomes.
- School leaders use a research-based instrument to observe all teachers, including new teachers, to promote professional growth, reflection and support school goals that improve student outcomes. (4.1)
 - Teachers set professional goals and staff development is offered to support them in realizing those goals. Observation schedules for the year include 2 formal observations and 6 informal observations per teacher. Teachers

receive feedback verbally, and via Teach Boost, an online teacher lab. Evidence provided from observation reports and classroom visits reveal a correlation between feedback and improved instructional practice in each classroom. This practice of frequent visits with actionable feedback is school-wide, and uses student data to reveal the needs for targeted instruction to improve student learning.

- The principal created a specific observation schedule including pre- and post-observation conference notes. The observations are frequent and feedback given to teachers is actionable. The feedback builds on engaging successful points of the lesson, and moves to discuss areas of extension that may be tried in the future. The principal's lesson documentation and professional conferences focus on several competencies: to demonstrate knowledge of the content, knowledge of students and to set clear instructional outcomes for their lessons; to plan questions and discussion prompts; and finally, to document student achievement and understanding at the end of each lesson. Grade team conferences and supervisory conferences include a review of student work products and formative assessment data. Each grade has a teacher grade leader who is part of the instructional cabinet and helps to turnkey new instructional practices, enabling teachers across grades or subjects to support each other. This transparent system for managing professional development, observations and feedback, enables school leadership to make informed decisions. Additionally, documents reveal school succession plans that afford teachers an opportunity to lead a grade and be part of the instructional cabinet. This progression moves from grade leader to coach and assistant principal. Mid-year review for grades 4 and 5 revealed feedback to teachers and focused instruction shows improved student outcomes by at least one level.

What the school needs to improve

- Translate relevant documents to communicate with families in multiple languages so that parents understand school expectations and support their children as they prepare for the next level, (3.4)
- Presently, the school has monthly “Coffee and Conversations” with the principal, regular Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, and sends home a parent newsletter, a Home-School Connection curricular newsletter, and a High Achiever parent newsletter. The school has created a culture of high expectations for children and families. However, some parents interviewed showed interest in having a better understanding of skill sets their children need to be college and career ready. Topics parents asked for include academic and personal behaviors, work habits and organizational skills. Although parents interviewed were very satisfied with their children's progress toward being college and career ready, there is a concern about the lack of translated materials for all parents. A regular system for translating materials or surveying parent interest for workshop topics is not yet fully evident thereby limiting partnership with all families.
- Students and families interviewed agree that the school has created a culture of high expectations. Guidance and advisement supports for middle school follow a routine protocol beginning in fifth grade for middle school articulation. However, some students expressed that pursuit of higher-level science explorations, in the context of robotics, for example, had to be individually

pursued outside of school. Evidence of a systematic approach to guidance and support for gifted students is not clear, limiting opportunities for students and families to successfully plan transitions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Joyce Briarwood 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