

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Louis Armstrong Elementary School

P.S. 143Q

34-74 113th Street

Corona

NY 11368

Principal: Jerry Brito

Dates of review: May 1- 3, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Louis Armstrong School is an elementary school with 1,666 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 92% Hispanic, 0% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 96.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Decisions regarding resources ,use of staff and student time, are beginning to support academic needs aligned to the school's instructional goals to improve learning, in order to better meet the academic needs of all students. (1.3)
 - After a review of the data showing students' struggles with decoding skills, the principal purchased *Words Their Way*, a school wide phonics program to support the school's instructional goal to increase reading readiness skills. In addition, a consultant from New York University was secured to launch the program. As a result of this initiative, first grade running records show that students are beginning to improve their decoding skills. The data indicated that 52% of students were not meeting proficiency for decoding skills in September, decreased to 47% not meeting proficiency in November. Similarly, third graders went from 44% in September to 39% in November. As a result, students' work products in these two grades are beginning to show evidence of stronger understanding of unfamiliar words and context clues in their informational writing.
 - Teacher teams meet to discuss the skills their students need in reading and math and are beginning to develop encouraging conversations around instructional practices and creation of tasks aligned their grade and to the school's instructional goals to improve math and literacy skills. Currently, a review of the first round of student tasks in writing indicate that some English language learners (ELL's) across grades 3-5 are beginning to show improvements in collecting and organizing facts for informational writing. Although a foundation has been set, it is difficult at this time to measure student performance because the teacher designed tasks have not yet been normed.
- School leaders support teacher development through frequent observation and feedback cycles that reflect on teachers' professional development needs that aim to improve instructional practices. (4.1)
 - Teachers indicate that the short, frequent visits to their classrooms by administrators help them focus on strategies that are effective and those that are not meeting the needs of all students. Some of the professional development opportunities and feedback has led to an exchange of ideas and resources to improve practice like norming the tasks so that they are measurable and able to be evaluated for student progress. In a comparison of observations it was noted that some recommendations are not addressed between visits creating a gap in effective feedback in order to support teachers' professional growth and best practices for students' academic improvements.
 - Observation reports reveal a common approach to noting key aspects of the classroom instruction, including teaching points, student tasks and questioning strategies. At this time, the school implements pockets of professional development linked to teachers' professional needs and the analysis of teacher data is at the beginning stages. As a result, the school's

use of observation data is just starting to impact professional development decisions to promote teacher's professional growth.

- The school has a strong commitment to the social, emotional and academic advancement of all students, who are nurtured in a calm and safe environment. (1.4)
 - Teachers and students alike welcome each other with smiles and respectful greetings. Students are proud to serve on the Safety Patrol Squad where they are able to help their peers with problems and discuss issues that are important to them and influential in the school. One such issue .like recycling, has received successful promotion and has resulted in cleaner bathrooms and hallways. The Parent Teacher Association has recently partnered with Chancellor Walcott and Councilwoman Ferrara's office to form a Taskforce in hopes of combating the severe overcrowding issue the school has been faced with over the years, to maintain a safe environment for both students and adults. Despite this problem, students posit that they are thankful for their teachers and their school and always feel cared for and safe.
 - Although this is one of the largest elementary schools in District 24, the school is like a cocoon where children are well known and are nurtured in an atmosphere where students celebrate their differences and are comfortable being honest with their thoughts and opinions. The school's character building program held during Town Hall sessions exemplify the six pillars of positive character traits. Since this program began there has been an increase in acts of kindness and a decrease in lunchroom incidents. Attendance awareness is stressed within classrooms and teachers and guidance counselors remind students of the importance of being punctual. All of the positive supports assist students in having a great outlook and always eager to learn and develop new skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Build the work around curriculum development and consistent alignment of key standards and Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks to increase rigor and higher order skills that cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - Teachers have worked diligently on creating Units of Study and incorporating the Teachers College curriculum as a backbone for activities and structures. Although curriculum is aligned to the CCLS, the school has not yet prioritized key standards as a focus to support students' learning needs. For example, unit plans reflect teaching points, but there is no indication of how the units are being targeted to key standards to support students' identified needs. Consequently, opportunities to support all learners, including high achievers, as well as students at risk, toward sufficient and timely gains in achievement are not evident.
 - Higher order thinking skills and strategies are visible in some classrooms; however, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. In some classrooms tasks are focused on the whole group and do not encourage students to demonstrate their thinking generate thoughtful discussions or student work products demonstrating inquiry, creativity or student choice. Additionally, across classrooms student activities are not based on an analysis of data, and tasks are not refined to meet the needs of all students.

This results in an inconsistency to challenge and engage all learners, thus limiting opportunities for achievement, as evidenced in student work samples which lack long term competencies or project based frameworks.

- Improve consistency of providing multiple entry points in all lessons to ensure that classroom instruction and learning activities offer appropriate challenge to all students to maximize academic engagement and achievement. (1.2)
 - The school is beginning to embed interim assessments aligned to tasks into teaching strategies so that student data can be tracked fluidly and cumulatively creating challenging work for all subgroups of students. At this time however, strategies inconsistently reflect the vision that the school is working towards. The pedagogical practices observed across the school were teacher directed with scaffolds that did not clearly and purposefully connect to data or assessments. For example, although students worked in groups, they performed non-differentiated tasks using the same textbook or resources. This resulted in limited opportunities for students to successfully build their content knowledge, ask probing questions, or have a deeper sense of the lesson through extensions aligned to their instructional levels.
 - Each classroom has student portfolios with a varied amount of student work; however, the products are not representative of students' choice of work or displaying evidence of high levels of thinking and writing. Lessons in classes observed showed an inconsistency in teaching practices aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, thus limiting engagement into the curriculum for all students. In addition, teaching strategies did not lead to higher order thinking and students' work products and discussions do not reflect active participation to support standard setting outcomes. As a result of these inconsistencies, not all students are provided with opportunities to meet college and career readiness skills, as evidenced in portfolio samples and limited student participation in class discussions.
- Promote greater reliability in the alignment of assessments to key standards to yield effective feedback with ongoing comprehension checks to inform curricular and instructional adjustments for increased student learning. (2.2)
 - Classroom teachers use assessments such as, running records and conference notes .Teacher teams are working on improving the alignment of their assessments to the CCLS standards, in order to determine the effectiveness of tasks on students' progress. Although assessments and rubrics are being utilized, discussion, feedback and next steps are not analyzed for contributing patterns and trends of student achievement by content and grade against the school's selected standards. Consequently, strategic and effective feedback from assessments to improve student outcomes limits opportunities to impact increased learning for all students.
 - Use of ongoing comprehension checks by teachers, during the delivery of lessons, is inconsistent across classrooms. A few teachers engage students in ongoing questioning to ensure understanding while others maintain a teacher directed approach to learning with minimum checks for understanding. "Turn and talk" is a common strategy that is used school wide however, in some classrooms student reflection and peer assessments are not implemented, thus limiting opportunities for teachers to assess ongoing student understanding in the classroom.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

| School name: The Louis Armstrong 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 |