

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Mary D. Carter School

Elementary School Q151

50-05 31st Avenue

Queens

NY 11377

Principal: Jason Goldner

Dates of review: January 29-30, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Mary D. Carter School is an elementary school with 533 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 13% Black, 52% Hispanic, 14% White, 19% Asian and 2% other students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 93.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school community appreciates the safe, respectful, and orderly school environment and the support for the personal development of students. (1.4)
 - The school supports students' voice and active participation through the student government. Students meet weekly with the guidance counselor and speech teacher to discuss important school-wide issues and help establish school policies. Students value opportunities to plan and participate in school activities such as fund raising. For example, students worked with teachers to make signs to encourage families to donate food and clothing for the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Clothing and food collected was delivered to Far Rockaway and Broad Channel. In addition, \$483 was raised for the American Red Cross. As a result, the students learned lifelong valuable lessons on kindness, compassion, charity and self-esteem. This has led to a positive school environment where student concerns are effectively addressed.
 - In response to the school survey, school leaders implemented a conflict resolution program. Teachers, parents and students participated in training sessions conducted by the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) teacher and guidance counselor on topics such as respect, positive decision making and consequences related to actions. They discussed strategies to help resolve current and future conflicts that may arise. Classroom lessons are provided to all classes regarding bullying, respect and life skills to help address issues of conflict. Since the implementation of this program, the school community noticed that overall students are making more respectful and better decisions. This has led to an increase in attendance, a 57% decrease in school-wide occurrences, and an 83% decrease in suspensions compared to this time last year.
- The conscientious principal has created a goal-oriented learning community that is well focused on teacher practice and student outcomes with intentional strategies to accelerate learning. (3.1)
 - The instructional cabinet and teams of teachers meet weekly to gather and analyze data in order to develop focused goals that support the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and carefully review student progress to improve student outcomes across all grades and subjects. For example, one school goal is to improve academic progress in writing and math for all students in grades K-5 by designing and implementing a new Teacher Team Inquiry Cycle Program. Teacher teams make adjustments to the core curriculum based on a review of student work, data and progress. All teacher teams participate in weekly meetings during extended day sessions in order to analyze student work, identify a focus skill with the greatest need across the grade, identify flexible target populations and work collaboratively to develop data driven instructional strategies to address the needs of the group of students. All teachers receive ongoing professional development from the network on how to use the inquiry approach in order to enhance student learning. The use of research based instructional strategies such as using graphic

organizers is presented and discussed during grade conferences based on the criteria slated within the Teacher's College on demand writing rubric which is aligned with the Common Core Learning Standard (CCLS). The implementation of these instructional strategies is monitored by the administration during classroom visits and observations. As a result, this improved teacher practice and enhanced student writing in generating ideas. Consequently, this work has increased student progress as noted in the comparison of pre- and post- data generated from the performance task writing rubric. For example, Level 1 decreased from 42% to 29%, Level 2 decreased from 35% to 33%, Level 3 increased from 17% to 29% and Level 4 increased from 9% to 11%, thus meeting the school's goal through the use of specific effective instructional strategies that has resulted in improvement in student learning outcomes.

- Teachers benefit from participating in professional collaborations that foster reflection as well as provide options for researching effective instructional techniques that focus on improved student achievement. (4.2)
 - Grade teams engage in weekly meetings to review school goals. The International Baccalaureate (IB) units of study that teachers created during the 2011-2012 school year are revisited and re-evaluated as teachers reflect upon and share best practices for each of the six IB units. Each unit is revised to incorporate the requirements stated within the citywide instructional expectations and is being implemented in 2012-2013. Units of study aligned to the CCLS were created for grades K-5. All six units reflect the instructional shifts within English language arts and math. Student performance for each unit of study is assessed using school-wide rubrics. Teacher teams have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school in that they have autonomy to direct their inquiry focus for each of the inquiry cycles implemented this year. This work has resulted in cohesive planning, coherence and consistency across all grades throughout the school as well as building a reflective collaborative community that focuses on improved student learning.
 - Classroom practices have improved as noted by an increase in writing volume and enhanced organization in student artifacts collected and analyzed by teacher teams. This has led to each student having an individual writing goal. Classroom teachers and intervention service providers work together to systematically analyze key elements of assessment data and student work for students whom they share. Based on this information, teacher teams independently determined specific areas of focus in writing. For example, kindergarten focused on conventions, grade 1 and 2 on sentence fluency, grade 3 on organization and grade 4 and 5 on word choice. As a result, the inquiry work demonstrated progress within the focused areas based on the analysis of the post on-demand writing assessments and as noted in student work folders.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the delivery of lessons and curricula so that academic tasks promote higher levels of thinking and cognitive engagement for all students. (1.1)
 - Teacher and school leaders found that text complexity was a challenge in literacy after analyzing student work. Summer institutes enabled teachers to unpack the Common Core Standards (CCLS) with text complexity and rigor and then write the curriculum. Even though students were reading materials based on their levels in lessons observed, there was an inconsistency in lessons across the school. For example, not all lessons included rigorous projects or high level questions particularly for English language learners and students with disabilities, resulting in the absence of engaging tasks that promote cognitive engagement and challenge student thinking, thus hindering academic growth.
- Promote consistency to ensure teachers strategically provide multiple entry points so that lessons fully challenge all students and result in producing meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - A focus on the design of coherent units of study and the use of assessments to measure student learning as outlined in the Danielson Framework, supports the school's beliefs about how students learn best. However, class visits reveal that teaching strategies, questioning techniques and the supplemental resources to meet the needs of all students, particularly students with disabilities and English language learners, do not consistently offer adequate scaffolds or multiple entry points that amplify learning opportunities to meet the diverse needs of all students. For example, math manipulatives, visual aides, and learning graphs to generate high level student participation were not evident in practice across all classrooms. Consequently, student discussion, levels of participation and efforts to promote thinking are uneven across classrooms, thus limiting opportunities for increased student learning.
- Improve the use of assessment results to monitor student progress and inform curricular and instructional adjustments to meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - Teachers use Acuity, end of unit exams, conference notes, Teachers College assessments and running records to measure student learning in English language arts. However, the observation of lessons across grades revealed that assessment results are not consistently used to make appropriate and necessary curricular and instructional adjustments to drive improvements in student performance. Additionally, class visits surfaced the sporadic use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments to inform teachers as to how to make the necessary adjustments to instruction to meet the needs of all students. Therefore, effective revisions to lessons and academic tasks are not consistently executed thereby limiting opportunities to maximize the learning potential of all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Mary D. Carter 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