

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Laurelton School

Elementary-Middle School 156

**229-02 137 Avenue
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Noreen Little

**Dates of review: June 4 – 5, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Evelyn W. Castro**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Laurelton School is an elementary-middle school with 590 students from Kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 95% Black, 4% Hispanic, 0% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 18% 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 93.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is involved in an ongoing process of creating common core aligned rigorous curricula for all students including students with disabilities and English language learners to improve learning outcomes. (1.1)
 - Curriculum maps across grades provide evidence of the faculty's work to align curricula to State standards. Examples of this include a unit of study in grade 8 on how the nation responded after World War I, using T charts, debate prompts, and analysis of political cartoons. Additionally curriculum units in Grade 5 math explore math standards, explaining patterns in multiplying multi-digit whole numbers, as well as, the use of the commutative and distributive properties of multiplication. The careful planning and use of curriculum maps to guide planning offers the students multiple entry points into the lessons and offers opportunities for differentiation and successful outcomes for students that help in closing the achievement gap and promote college and career readiness for all students.
 - In classes and team meetings, and in lesson plans reviewed, the planning of academic tasks that are rigorous and promote higher order thinking for all students including relevant subgroups is a priority. Students in grade 8 were required to research and collaborate to provide a paper on fast food, analyzing advertisement practices entitled, "Fast Food Owners Are Owing You." Students interviewed said this was a favorite assignment. It allowed them to use their skills to interview people, research, get data, and write about real world problems. Curriculum maps across grades reflect planning for students to undertake research on Mexico, solve geometric problems, and engage in scientific exploration. Curriculum maps aligned to CCLS leads to task completions that promote rigorous habits for diverse students, and positive academic outcomes.
- Grading policies and assessment practices are ongoing and leverage changes to improve instructional strategies across the school and classroom levels. (2.2)
 - Teachers create and use assessments and rubrics that are evident across classrooms. Student assessment outcomes are also noted in teacher observations and used in teacher conference notes to give actionable feedback to students. Teachers shared 'Glows & Grows', a rubric aligned to CCLS tasks and a method of informing students about the areas where they are doing well and areas for improvement. In turn, student work shows improvement. Furthermore, according to minutes of team and staff meetings, the impact of sharing assessment results has increased cohesion across grades. Teachers are using pre-and-post unit assessments in science and social studies to make instructional adjustments. Assessment tasks are embedded within units and are coupled with the use of Acuity assessments in English language arts and math. A review of curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans over time

show refined work products from improved collaboration and communication among teacher teams. This process, which includes meetings, professional development, observations, and actionable feedback, has helped teachers to also improve their questioning techniques and adjust curriculum at the classroom level and across the grades as evidenced by lesson plans and meeting notes reviewed.

- Classroom visitations in grades one through five use consistent, common strategies to assess comprehension. Methods noted were both formal and informal and include hand signals in the lower grades, stop and jots, exit slips, think-pair-share, slates/wipe-off boards, and pre-and-post unit assessments to help staff determine progress toward school goals and individual student goals. Additionally, student self-assessment is evident in classrooms. For example, one student in grade 5 stated that he knows how to develop an argument for or against having a longer school day by using a rubric and asking himself questions after writing. He created a T-chart to record supportive argument points and counterpoints. Teachers make adjustments to meet the needs of their students as evident in writing samples and additional writing topics from classroom binders show evidence of improved student outcomes.
- The school uses a common research-based teaching framework to support teacher development via frequent cycles of observations so that all teachers are reflective, and use learning outcomes to elevate instruction. (4.1)
 - School leaders observe teachers formally and informally using a research-based instrument and the analysis of learning outcomes to evaluate school wide instructional goals and implement strategies to promote professional growth and reflection. This includes a specific focus on new teachers. School leaders initiate teacher development through a self-assessment tool and a research-based formative assessments program. Leadership alternates formal and informal observations with frequent short visits to classrooms and give actionable feedback to teachers using practices aligned to the Danielson rubric. The system was developed over time by the principal and her team after review of data. Specific material was purchased that aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and needs of the students. It assisted in aligning instruction, observation, feedback, and professional development and student outcomes. New teachers receive additional support, are assigned a mentor, and participate in external professional development activities. As a result of the ongoing review of periodic assessments and teacher observations, school leaders expand effective instructional practices and promote teacher development including the support of new teachers in developing best practices through collaboration with senior teachers and coaches.
 - School leaders use a research-based framework to formally and informally observe teachers and provide them with actionable feedback through verbal and electronic media. The schools observation plan is designed to strengthen instructional practice through SMART goals that are a part of the focus of pre-and post-observation conferences. School leaders follow up with targeted professional development opportunities,

monitoring of teacher practice, participation in team meetings and review of assessment data. Ongoing review of assessments by administrators and school staff led the academic team to focus on the development of vocabulary and measurement across grades and in all subjects. This emphasis is reviewed in lesson planning and supported through professional development. English language arts teachers work collaboratively in team planning meetings to plan effective vocabulary development lessons across subjects and grades capturing teacher strengths leading to school progress towards its instructional goals to improve student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand teacher pedagogy that supports all teachers in designing learning experiences aligned to the school wide belief system that meets the needs of all students and promotes cognitive engagement for all students. (1.2)
 - Instructional practices are beginning to reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best, which includes, active learning and grouping students for instruction. Additionally, school leaders focus on questioning and student interaction around solving problems to increase student engagement. For example, in one grade 5 math class the teacher grouped the children and used materials according to the needs of the students to solve problems on angles. The teacher worked with students at risk of not meeting standards including students with disabilities, asking higher order questions and scaffolding prior learning experiences. However, some classes visited did not provide multiple entry points into lessons or assessed student comprehension that ensures student engagement and mastery of skills. Grades 3 and 4 students engaged in a study of animals and were enthusiastic about comparing and contrasting animal characteristics. Students were provided opportunities to turn and talk, but teacher assessment of student comprehension was not consistent throughout the lesson. Questioning scaffolds to promote higher-order thinking in all students did not occur. Thus, there are missed opportunities to create challenging learning experiences across all classrooms to consistently engage diverse groups of learners and student development of critical thinking skills. Teachers are making strides in providing multiple entry points in their lesson delivery, as well as, questioning that promotes higher order thinking. In some classrooms including, a special education classroom, teachers used an animated power point to reinforce and extend thinking and skills in English language arts. Teachers made pauses on the power point to ask probing questions and encourage each child to answer. This provided multiple entry points, scaffolding and even levels of student thinking and participation. In a number of other classrooms, questioning did not allow clarity of directions to the lesson, and discussions did not reflect higher level questions which resulted in missed opportunities to promote quality work products and maximize student participation and thinking.
- Expand college and career readiness, and a culture to enhance student and families' perception of the school's high expectations, and prepare students for the next academic level.(3.4)

- Students and parents receive progress reports and newsletters as sources of information and to understand student progress toward goals. Students and parents are also aware of the nearby York College and activities available on the campus. Some students interviewed revealed that their school experience though positive could be improved by more informational trips to expose them to college and careers. Moreover, parents and students interviewed stated that a respectful school/community relationship that also includes high expectations is limited. The absence of a plan for meaningful activities, frequent trips to colleges, and communication to enhance student perception of high expectations for them with a focus on college and career readiness limits full understanding of school expectations and positive student outcomes.
- Guidance conducts sessions on a one to one basis or in small groups. There are continuous efforts by the counseling team to meet student needs. However, students interviewed state they are not receiving consistent feedback, or ongoing advisement particularly in the middle school. Additionally, the impending loss of middle school grades has had an adverse effect on school climate as evidenced by students who expressed they do not feel supported by staff during this difficult time, thus limiting student preparation for the next level.
- Continue to develop the quality of evaluation processes to assist teachers with instructional adjustments and support student needs in gaining mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards. (5.1)
 - School leaders and faculty use data sheets at team meetings and instructional cabinet meetings to focus on writing with an emphasis on students with disabilities and English language learners in efforts to reach the school's academic yearly progress. This is reflected in the minutes examined to reach a decision to change curricular approaches to support the academic growth of this population of students. Instructional shifts are examined in team meetings to maximize the implementation of the CCLS units. However, there is no evidence of a process in place to share school initiatives, such as, this instructional focus with all constituents of the school. Parents interviewed knew the school was trying to improve academic outcomes, but were not aware of the specifics of the focus or the change in practice. Involving all constituencies in planning implementation and regular evaluation is not yet a school-wide process limiting shared decision-making and improved student achievement.
 - Teachers are deepening their understanding of curricular practices that lead to increased teacher capacity and contribute to a positive school culture as evidenced through formal and informal observations and actionable feedback reviewed in observation reports. Bulletin board exhibits are also demonstrative of one successful school method of sharing and reinforcing school culture and expectations. However, a process to evaluate school culture and school expectations is developing and has not had an effect on all constituents. Students and staff interviewed voiced concern regarding the policies and practices that are in effect, especially in the middle school, explaining that there is no overall supervision in the middle school, on the second floor of the school

to implement and monitor school policies and procedures. As a result, teachers monitor and enforce school expectations and curriculum only within their own individual classrooms, limiting the effectiveness of a school wide positive culture and expectations for all students both academically and behaviorally.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Laurelton 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