

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The John J. Driscoll School

31R016

**80 Monroe Avenue
Staten island
NY 10301**

Principal: Vincenza Gallasio

Dates of review: January 23, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Erminia Claudio

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John J. Driscoll is an elementary school with 800 students from kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 25% Black, 56% Hispanic, 13% White, 5% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers use data tools to organize, aggregate and analyze student performance trends to inform school-wide and classroom instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - In response to the prior year's quality review school leaders in collaboration with teacher teams have created curriculum assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are specific to address data defined student and subgroup needs. These tools are used by all teachers and are monitored by school leaders to track progress for individual and cohorts of students school-wide. For example, school leaders noticed that the new math program's pre- mid and post- assessments demonstrated a disparity between pre- and post- assessment primarily that the pre- assessment significantly yielded higher achievement than the post and did not pinpoint true areas of concern. As a result, teachers modified pre- assessments to align more closely to the post assessment enabling teachers to adjust instruction to address areas of need. This was evidenced in the 10% increase of students in grade 5 achieving levels 3 and 4 on end of the unit exams in math. The consistent use of rubrics and feedback to students ensures an environment in which students know what they need to improve on and what their next steps are to achieve higher levels of proficiency. At the student meeting with the reviewer, students shared that they use rubrics to help them do their best work and shared work products that evidenced the use of rubrics and self reflection. In an effort to ensure that a school created math task was aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), the school submitted the task to McGraw Hill (Acuity) for feedback. This feedback included suggestions for wording of questions and adjusting mathematical operations to support a closer alignment to the CCLS. As a result teachers state that this feedback not only guided their first task but is guiding them in creating other assessments. The 2012 School Environment Survey indicated that parents would like frequent feedback on how their children are doing. Consequently, the school created a progress report, and now releases them to parents several weeks prior to the school report card. Parents voiced that the progress report gives them an opportunity to see what their children need help in and guides the conversation they have with teachers during parent teacher conferences. Grade 4 and 5 teachers receive real time data from the researched base *Time to Know* curriculum, which allows them to make on the spot teaching adjustments to support individual and groups of students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Consequently, due to the success of grade 4 and 5 teachers using real time data to support individual students' needs, grade 3 teachers are modeling the use of real time data to make adjustments to their teaching.
- The principal's effective use of budget, resource and talent supports the school's overarching goals of developing and delivering effective instruction. (1.3)
 - The decision to loop seven teachers to the next grade with their classes has afforded students and their teachers the benefit of having a seamless transition from grade to grade. Teachers voiced that the beginning of the

school year was especially smooth because they know their students learning needs and personalities. Students voiced that they were thrilled to have the same teachers because they knew what their teachers expected from them. Equally important, is the rapport that was developed between individual teachers and their students. Sustaining a dual language program has afforded both bilingual and monolingual students an opportunity to learn in two languages. 85% of students in the dual language classes have made significant gains in English language arts (ELA) and math as compared to their peers, as evidenced on student work products, acuity and end of the unit assessments. At the parent meeting, several parents raved about the dual language program. They feel that their children are doing well because they have this opportunity. Several fifth grade students that have been in the dual language class since kindergarten shared that they are doing well because they have the advantage to learn in two languages. One student shared that being in the dual language class will open doors for him in the future. In addition, this year, the principal's allocation of fiscal resources sustains three academic intervention teachers (AIS) and expanded these services to include English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD). Academic Intervention Support (AIS) teachers plan with classroom teachers to ensure that individual plans of action supports students' goals, affording all students access to the curricula based on each students' instructional need. As a result, 85% of students in grades 3-5 made gains from the first administration of running records in October to the second administration in January. The additional decision to create two coach positions from within the school staff and the programming of common planning time for teachers to meet several times a week with the coaches has actualized in all students; kindergarten through 5th grade already experiencing two ELA and two math common core tasks. Coaches meet regularly with the school's instructional team and grade level inquiry teams to look at student work, plan lessons to support individual and groups of students, create common assessments and infuse technology into the curriculum. Much of this work has been focused on writing in ELA and math. As a result, the school has uniformed writing rubrics and has created questions aligned to Depth of Knowledge (DOK) in math, ensuring that the school is on target to meet their goal of increasing the number of students achieving proficiency on the New York State ELA and math exams.

- The school maintains a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
 - The school is a warm and nurturing environment in which all staff members respect students and families. This was evident in every conversation that the reviewer had with parents and students. Every student is known well by several adults, including school leaders who have a great rapport with students. Both parents and students believe that school leaders and staff care deeply about the students and have high expectations for them. For example, students shared work products and were eager to explain how the support they receive from their teachers helps them to be a better student. Students also shared that they have several adults that they can go to if they need help, whether it is academic or social emotional. Parents shared that the school goes above and beyond to support them in understanding what it means for their child to be college and career ready. For example, parents cited

various workshops that they have attended that have helped them understand the rigor of the Common Core Learning Standards. The parent coordinator, the school's academic coaches and guidance staff facilitate various workshops such as bullying and homework help to partner with parents to support academic and social emotional achievement. The school has extensive after-school programs that offer students and their families a variety of supports, such as homework help for parents and students and access to resources, test prep programs for ELL's and SWD's, and a performing arts enrichment program. Through a partnership with the YMCA, students are offered conflict resolution and peer mediation strategies. School leaders voiced that as a result of the training students receive from peer mediation and conflict resolution, reportable occurrences have gone down by 5%. Student shared with the reviewer that they are able to express their feelings. For example, "I feel mad when..." The YMCA also supports students' critical thinking skills through offering chess as an activity. The school's Baby Jay Incentive Program allows students to accumulate points for good attendance, wearing their uniforms and completion of homework. Points earned are used towards such things as, Baby Jay Bracelet, a homework pass or breakfast or lunch with the principal. To increase daily attendance the principal initiated an attendance protocol in which all classroom teachers create an attendance plan for their students. Each week, one class on each grade that demonstrates perfect attendance has the distinction of hanging the attendance banner on their classroom door. Classes that have 95% or better attendance on specified days, such as the day before a three day weekend or holiday are given the opportunity to watch an age appropriate movie in class. Once a month, students with perfect attendance are part of a raffle to receive a donated bicycle. As a result student attendance has increased from 93% in January 2012 to 95% in January 2013.

- The use of a research based common framework for classroom observations along with the analysis of student work and professional goals to drive professional development leads to improved student performance. (4.1)
 - Teachers collaboratively agree upon grade level goals and personal goals for them to support student performance. For example, the first grade teachers' goal is to develop collaborative and cohesive reading, writing, math and social studies lessons for the entire grade. A second grade teacher's personal goal is to incorporate the use of technology into lessons and class activities to enhance students' learning and meet their diverse needs. School leaders are in their fourth cycle of short observations using a research-based framework to capture strengths, challenges and next steps and provide consistent actionable feedback to teachers with an emphasis on supporting them in improved pedagogy, inclusive of suggesting research-based articles and professional books for reflection. School leaders instituted best practice walkthroughs and created a best practice protocol for teachers to assist them in further developing their practice. The principal programmed weekly back to back periods affording teachers time to meet and plan lessons together. Each week a different teacher on the grade conducts a lesson while colleagues observe. Teachers debrief after the lesson and share glows, grows, and take aways, based on the research-based teaching framework. Often these best practice walks are centered on a particular part of the lesson or strategy being taught such as focusing on explicit teaching during the

mini lesson and making sure that the teaching point is the focus of the lesson. As a result, teachers voiced that using a common teaching framework during inter-visitations has deepened their level of conversation about their teaching and improved their teaching practice. In addition, school leaders and coaches conduct weekly walkthroughs. Before the walkthroughs teachers receive an email informing them of the focus of the walkthrough. For example, explicit teaching and teaching points were a focus for one of these professional learning experiences. Teachers' state the feedback they receive from school leaders and academic coaches has enhanced the work they are doing around crafting teaching points to support the rigor of the mini lesson.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the instructional coherence across subject areas and grades through standards aligned curricula that emphasize rigorous thinking and skills to cognitively engage all learners including ELL's and SWD. (1.1)
 - School leaders and teacher teams reflecting on gaps that exist between what the school is doing and what the demands are of the Common Core Learning Standards, have made purposeful decisions to emphasize key standards. For example, the work the school is doing around lifting the level of student writing across ELA, math, science and social studies, and deepening the level of text complexity and explicit teaching. In grades 4 and 5 students are exposed to the research based *Time to Know* computer based curriculum that supports a real-world learning environment that includes choices, collaboration, and creativity. Students develop their skills from one standards-aligned activity to the next. While there is ample evidence of teacher planning through the curriculum maps, there are still a few classrooms across grades that student artifacts and work products are not consistent with the level of planning teachers are doing. Consequently, some students do not have the benefit of being cognitively engaged in tasks that support their learning needs.
- Ensure that curricula and academic tasks are suitably differentiated to support instruction that challenge students in their learning in order to promote meaningful student work. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers have been focusing on refining teaching points to support explicit teaching. Most teachers are cognizant of checking for understanding so that on the spot adjustments can be made. For example, in many classrooms visited teachers either rephrased parts of the lesson, or asked clarifying questions. While most classes visited evidenced the planning that teacher are doing during curriculum and inquiry time, there were a few classrooms that did not. For example, in a few classrooms across grades the lesson did not include entry points for all learners and the level of questioning did not lead to students thinking critically. The school recognizes, but has not yet addressed the need for deepening the DOK work so that all tasks lead to high levels of student engagement and thinking in all classrooms for all learners, thus limiting all students from engaging in learning experiences that challenge and engage them.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The John J. Driscoll 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