

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 001 Courtlandt School

Elementary School 07X001

**335 EAST 152 STREET
BRONX
NY, 10451**

Principal: JORGE PERDOMO

**Dates of review: May 14-15, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Deena Abu-Lughod**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 001 Courtlandt School is an elementary school with 683 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 21% Black, 76% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Innovative organizational decisions enable the school to make full use of resources to support attainment of the school's goals and accelerate student learning. (1.3)
 - Resources are well aligned to provide a technology-rich environment that offers multiple ways of meeting student needs both during the day and afterschool. To enhance questioning and discussion and to build academic language, the principal redesigned the flows of the day so that two days are devoted to literacy, adding explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction as well as interactive read-alouds to the school's customary reading and writing workshops. On alternate days, instruction focuses on mathematics, including a new period inspired by the faculty's study of Sherry Parrish's *Number Talks* when students articulate their mental math computation strategies and study math vocabulary. Demonstrations of learning, assessment, goal-setting and reflection occur on Fridays. Teachers indicate this schedule is helping them work more deeply on the curricular goals and improves student focus. All classrooms are equipped with sufficient computers that students use for self-directed study, including some highly visual programs that are particularly supportive of the large portion who are English language learners or have individualized education plans. In addition, students take technology classes where they learn advanced skills, such as creating three dimensional house designs using Google Sketch-Up. As a result, students have meaningful opportunities to create work products that reflect the school's aspirations to prepare them for the 21st century.
 - Nearly all classes have fewer than 25 students, providing a low student-teacher ratio that ensures teachers can provide individualized support through conferring. This ratio is further reduced in the integrated co-teaching classes, where parallel teaching and small group instruction is tailored to particular small group needs. Through the inquiry process, teams of teachers hold themselves accountable for the progress of their focus students as they share student work to surface misconceptions and problems, and develop strategies to address common issues. In addition, the school provides specific interventions during the day, afterschool, and through a Saturday academy that continues even after the State exams. For example, to close the achievement gap, lower grade teachers have been trained to provide Reading Recovery to support struggling readers. Meanwhile, the school leverages the strengths of the higher performing students in "advanced placement" classes, using *Common Core Clinic* to further advance math ability and *Hot Topics* in science. These approaches ensure all students are challenged at a suitable level. While there has been significant teacher turnover over the years, many recent hires come from a pool of teachers trained by the Math Up partnership with Lehman College or have served as interns at the school. This pipeline ensures that incoming staff are fully committed to the school's instructional model and high standards. These structures, together with the leader's high expectations for professional practice, enable teachers to support learning needs and make progress towards the school's goals.
- The school's commitment to fostering personal and academic growth amongst all stakeholders results in a culture of trust and respect. (1.4)

- The school has built a positive culture that honors its vision of “health, happiness, and peace.” Morning meetings reinforce the monthly themes that comprise the year-long focus on character building. Guided in part by a new customized monthly planner, selected books, art projects and choral and theatrical presentations reinforce these themes. Student voice is welcome, and finds an outlet in their production of five yearly televised talk shows performed live in the auditorium for students and their families. In one student-produced video, students acted in a Star-Wars themed show to teach a visitor from another planet what respect means and how to demonstrate respect in the classroom, lunchroom, and hallways. A partnership with Ramapo for Children supports teachers, especially new ones, in creating environments that are conducive to learning. Consultants supplement the workshops with classroom-based coaching, and all teachers have participated in additional professional development in Character Counts and Second Step. As a result, in every classroom, an atmosphere of calm and focus on learning prevails. Parents feel welcome at the school they describe as family-oriented, that communicates well with them, and that offers opportunities for their own growth in cooking, jewelry-making and English classes as well as art classes they attend with their children. Even though survey data revealed that over 90 percent of parents were satisfied with the degree of safety at the school, the school continues to make improvements based on data. For example, when the analysis of the location of incidents last year revealed that many of these occurred in the playground, the school responded by involving school aids and volunteer teachers in organized play, such as soccer and hopscotch, leading to a further reduction in playground incidents. As a result of all these initiatives, incidents have plummeted from 200 to 129 this year and suspensions have declined from 29 to 12.
- Strategic use of common assessments enables teachers and administrators to identify trends and track progress to make adjustments that meet the needs of diverse learners. (2.2)
 - Throughout the school, teachers use common assessments that allow school leaders to evaluate progress within and across grades. Reading levels are monitored through the use of running records, with the literacy coach spot-checking results to ensure all teachers administer them accurately. After observing a high correlation between last year’s iReady computer-based literacy and math assessments with actual results on State exams, the school expanded its use across all grades. While teachers use individual student results to plan differentiated activities or to assign targeted computer-based activities that students can complete independently, administrators use overall performance and progress scores to ascertain where growth is lagging. This allows leaders to identify which teachers need more support in developing their practice and to make schoolwide changes. For example, when the initial assessment revealed a school-wide weakness in vocabulary, the school introduced a period of explicit vocabulary instruction. Recent results on iReady reveal growth of more than 20 points in this area. Similarly, after instituting the daily math talks the number of students in the highest of the three tiers doubled.
 - Through questioning during read-alouds and weekly conferencing in both literacy and math, teachers monitor student understanding. In addition, for substantive writing pieces, students typically prepare two drafts, revising their work based on conferences with their teachers, and self-

and peer-assessment, in some cases using child-friendly rubrics aligned to standards. The introduction of the new In Book assessment, books with stickers that pose questions at certain points in each chapter to which students must respond in writing allows teachers to compare student responses with model responses to monitor comprehension on longer texts. During lessons, students use a variety of hand signals to provide teachers with ongoing feedback on whether they are still thinking, ready to share an answer, agree or disagree, or have something to add. These practices enable teachers to continually identify and address areas of need.

- A coherent vision of school improvement links professional development to desired changes in student behaviors, skills and outcomes to drive improvements in teaching and learning. (3.1)
 - The school builds its action plans around two main instructional goals: to implement the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), with a focus on engagement, questioning and discussion, and to differentiate instruction, with a focus on conferring and small group instruction. Action plans in the Comprehensive Education Plan specify exactly what steps are expected to be taken to achieve these goals. The principal states that “I only demand what I can support,” so before instituting the change in the flow of the day, he engaged in teaching himself, confirming the teachers’ concerns about time constraints as they implemented new practices to meet the demands of the CCLS. This mid-year adjustment has enabled teachers to go deeper, resulting in important differences in writing volume and quality and in the frequency and quality of discussion. In addition, the ongoing analysis of data collected during daily walkthroughs and discussions with teachers resulted in a significant change in the school’s long-standing lab-site model of professional development. This year, instead of teachers attempting to replicate practices after observing strategies in the lab-site, teachers bring several students at different levels to a co-teaching room where they implement the demonstrated practice immediately, observe the impact, get feedback from instructional experts, and reflect on their success. As a result, teachers say that they are more adept at incorporating changes in practice. Data analysis also drives selection of program materials. For example, in response to a low growth rate in the performance of the mostly general education students in the school’s top two-thirds, the school adopted Hot Topics for use afterschool. These non-fiction materials involve students in emulating professional research and writing techniques and build content-area knowledge and vocabulary. Positive results on the embedded assessments and teacher feedback led to the inclusion of these high interest non-fiction materials as in-class center options during the day.

What the school needs to improve

- Integrate the Common Core standards and instructional shifts more deliberately across the curricula so that higher order skills are embedded consistently in all content areas to improve readiness levels. (1.1)
 - The school offers many rich opportunities for learning, including the arts and technology, both during the day and afterschool. The school relies on the Teacher’s College Reading and Writing program to align its literacy curriculum to the CCLS, adapting or substituting units as needed, and ensuring coverage of informational, opinion and narrative writing.

However, the school has not reflected deeply on how the program addresses key standards or the instructional shifts, so there is insufficient attention to planning lessons that align to standards during the literacy block or curricula in other content areas. As a result, some classroom assignments ask students to perform particular reading assignments at a level far below what is expected for that grade or on texts that lack sufficient complexity. For example, in a fifth grade social studies class, students were expected to complete a graphic organizer to compare and contrast basic information, an assignment whose complexity matches the standard at a lower grade level. In addition, examination of student work reveals little attention to the specific demands of the standards. So, while teachers are pleased that students are now able to provide up to three reasons in supporting their opinions, there are few references to text-based evidence and no work sample revealed explicit citations. The school has adapted and supplemented the Everyday Math program in accordance with the guidance provided centrally, and pacing calendars reflect attention to the major work of the grade, with additional work to build fluency. However, the school is still developing its understanding of real-life application and how modeling serves to build conceptual understanding. As a result, not all students have opportunities to engage in the kind of higher level thinking that promote college and career readiness that the school intends for its students.

- Institutionalize effective teaching practices to ensure that all students benefit from frequent opportunities to interact with their peers in challenging tasks. (1.2)
 - Across the school, teachers use the workshop model to deliver instruction, and express a commitment to fostering student independence and choice. In addition, the impact of the school's focus on questioning and discussion was evident, as most students had opportunities for partner talk and to answer questions in whole group discussions. Some teachers make excellent use of technology during instruction to get minds actively involved. For example, in a math class on the coordinate plane, the Brain Pop video was used interactively, where the teacher prompted the students to discuss what the answers might be and then shared responses before proceeding with the video which served to reinforce the learning. In a self-contained class, partnerships used boxes and bullets to help them summarize a complex text. However, such practices were inconsistent across the school, as evidenced by student work and in classroom visits. For example, in one class, students completed worksheets while the teacher circulated providing generic feedback, and more generally, there was little evidence of regular problem solving in mathematics. Students work for considerably long periods independently, allowing teachers to confer with individuals, a practice the school emphasizes as the highest form of differentiation. However, in some cases, the substance of these conferences varied little between students and questions in small groups failed to elicit deeper thinking. The absence of probing questions in small groups and in conferencing limits the degree to which students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, can demonstrate mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 001 Courtlandt 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