

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Ryer Avenue Elementary School

Elementary School X009

**230 East 183rd. St.
Bronx, New York 10458**

Principal: Jacqueline Bailey

Dates of review: November 27 – 28, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 9 is an elementary school school with 754 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 18% Black, 79% Hispanic, 0% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 10% 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 90.1 %.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school promotes a culture of mutual respect which supports student and adult learning and cultivates a range of positive student behaviors which bolster student social and emotional growth. (1.4)
 - Students are well known by their teachers, administration and guidance staff. They overwhelmingly expressed they feel safe in the school. Students seek support from guidance, coaches and the school's social worker to solve their concerns. Parents, students and staff describe the school as a safe, nurturing and welcoming place in which to learn. Parents state they have complete trust in the school and feel at "peace" sending their children to the school. They feel the "whole staff" takes care of the students. Parents express "the school is like a family". They appreciate that teachers provide individualized "one to one" attention to the students and notice the students are learning. Parents and students feel comfortable reaching out to the administration, the guidance team, social worker and teachers for support. They attend monthly "Breakfast with Principal" sessions, where they discuss school issues and learn about the school's curriculum. Parents are particularly pleased that the school offers an after school program, as they feel it provides additional academic support for students. This communal sense of responsibility ensures there is a respectful tone in the school that enables students to focus on their work, learn and be successful.
 - Morning messages celebrate student perfect attendance. A school honor roll highlights students with excellent attendance and students that have performed at their best. Students state they commit to "doing their best" Each day they recite the school's pledge and "say" their "ABCs," an abbreviation for "Academics, Behavior and Citizenship." These daily rituals bolster social and emotional growth and serve as student reminders to be model students The brief daily early morning exercise routine also contributes to students' overall well being As a result, students are prepared for the school day and understand well the student behaviors needed to succeed in school.
- The school uses data from the observation of classroom teaching to elevate school wide instructional practices, professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
 - School leaders participate in short frequent cycles of teacher observations that provide teachers with effective feedback to support teacher professional growth. The school's use of Danielson's Framework provides leaders with the opportunity to observe teacher practice and identify areas of focus for teachers. For example, written feedback to teachers from school leaders reveals, collaborative planning, data driven instruction, effective use of rubrics are areas of focus for teachers in the school. Therefore, the school designed opportunities for teachers to reflect and discuss their work with administration, coaches, during team meetings and workshops sessions. In addition, new teachers pair with coaches to support them with their classroom environment and planning. As a result new teachers feel supported, teachers are building

instructional practices and benefitting from feedback practices that support ongoing professional growth.

- Observation data guides the professional development plan for the school. An extensive menu of weekly professional development opportunities serves as the venue to positively influence teacher classroom instruction. The first cycle of the school's differentiated professional development plan provides teachers with workshop sessions in *New Teacher Orientation*, *Vocabulary Building in the Classroom*, *Moving Forward in Mathematics and Standards Based Rubrics*. School leader feedback practices ensure a literacy coach or math coach is assigned to work with a teacher for a period of time. A timeframe is identified and at the conclusion of the timeframe, administrators return to the classrooms to examine the effectiveness of teacher practice. The informal observation of classroom teaching practices leads to coherent and consistent classroom instructional practices and a heightened sense of teacher reflection about their craft.
- Teacher teams engage in frequent structured inquiry to examine student work, adjust curriculum and refine teaching practices resulting in improved student learning outcomes. (4.2)
 - Teachers collaborate during weekly common periods to continue to design detailed units of study that are aligned to CCLS and the school's instructional goals. The units of study are stored on a school wiki where teachers have access to the units and can tailor them as needed to meet the specific needs of their students. Teachers also meet on vertical teams to determine the efficacy of the units from one grade to another and examine student work during structured inquiry sessions. Teams joined by Common Core Instructional Leaders (CCIL) and coaches complement the collaborative inquiry process. Teachers express they appreciate that they meet as teams as it provides them the opportunity to look deeply at student work. For example, review of student work revealed that teaching points of a unit of study needed to be changed and that they need to add time for students to talk about their work. Therefore, teachers identified teaching points and added additional time for students to discuss work. All teachers participate in this process. As a result of this process, teachers consider the implications for instruction and planning and strengthen their instructional capacity.
 - Teams welcome the opportunity to collaborate. Together they follow their established protocols and examine student work using rubrics. Collective decisions around adjustments to curricula, teacher practice and "next steps" for students are made during these meetings. For example, an analysis of student narrative writing samples revealed students need to strengthen their conclusions. A collective decision was made to immerse students in a variety of mentor texts that provided exemplary endings. The use of graphic organizers to organize student writing around one "small moment" was a suggested strategy made by another teacher team. As a result of this process, teachers refine their instructional practice and improve learning outcomes for students.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the design of curricula and academic tasks to consistently support rigorous and cognitively engaging learning opportunities for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. (1.1)
 - School leaders and faculty have invested a great deal of time and effort on designing units of study and academic tasks that are aligned to key standards of the CCLS and CIE instructional shifts. The topics of the units in English language arts are the same across grades and differ in terms of the key standards addressed at each grade level. Teachers collaboratively design units in writing and use rubrics to analyze student work. However, while school leaders and coaches have provided professional development around the use of the Depth of Knowledge rubric to evaluate the rigor of tasks, this practice was not evident across classrooms. Visits to classrooms reveal inconsistent opportunities for students to engage in rigorous tasks. Students in one class listened to a lesson about energy. At the conclusion of the lesson, students worked in groups and were requested to list three forms of energy. Students in another classroom were also asked to list possible types of story endings for their writing pieces. The Depth of Knowledge rubric was not used to evaluate the level of rigor of tasks. Consequently, these tasks limit student cognitive engagement and do not require students to activate higher order thinking.
 - Classroom tasks were not tiered to provide multiple entry points for English language learners or special education students. For example, in a lesson about designing “right there” questions all students were asked to complete the same task. Students were asked to design questions about the story the teacher had read to them. At the conclusion of the lesson, students shared their questions with the teacher. Student grouping to facilitate an exchange of student designed questions and student discussion about their questions was not evident. In addition, the school’s written units of study do not reflect planning for English language learners or students with disabilities. The lack of purposeful planning for these sub groups limits their learning experiences.
- Strengthen teacher practice so that teachers consistently develop high level questions and students engage in discussions that promote high levels of thinking. (1.2)
 - School leaders chose to focus on rigor, teacher questioning, student vocabulary development and student discussions as the core of their work. Across the school it was evident classroom teachers focused on amplifying student vocabulary. Classroom bulletin boards highlighted the words students studied. For example: the word “recall,” one of the student focus words for the week, was used by students in their writing and in response to teacher questions, thus contributing to improving student language development. However, teacher low level questions limit rigor and hinder the opportunity for students to call on high order thinking. In one classroom, the teacher posed questions such as: “Why did they open the restaurant?” and “Why did the character do that?” which activated student thinking. In other lessons, teacher questions were posed to elicit

yes/no responses or basic recall of facts thus limiting the opportunity for students to maximize learning and extend their thinking.

- Across classrooms teachers use the workshop model, partnership and “turn and talk” practices to promote student participation. However, teacher directed lessons did not promote student group discussions. Visits to classrooms reveal student talk and conversation is minimal. While students were expected to “turn and talk”, conversations that engaged students in an exchange of ideas and thinking was not evident. For example, in a lesson about designing story endings, students were asked to list the possible story endings, little time was provided for students to discuss their selections. As a result, there are missed opportunities for students to collaborate and discuss their story ending selection. In another classroom, students were expected to create their own questions about a story and students shared their questions with the teacher. However, students were not encouraged to discuss their questions with partners or in groups. This practice leads to low levels of student engagement and participation in discussions in some classrooms. Consequently, students are limited in an exchange of ideas and engaging in higher order thinking.
- Improve the alignment of interim assessments and grading policies across content areas to ensure students self-assess and are able to identify their next learning steps. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams meet regularly and use teacher made rubrics to assess student work. Students engage in writing experiences. “Published” student writing pieces are exhibited and highlighted on classroom and hallway bulletin boards. Student math problem solving work is also displayed. Students state they use rubrics to “know if their math work is getting better.” Teachers use rubrics to assess student writing. However, student use of rubrics in writing to self assess is not yet fully developed. Students understand that a level 1 is low and that a 4 is high, but they are unable to understand how to use the rubric to raise the quality of their own work. The lack of a structure that supports students’ full use of rubrics results in missed opportunities for students to self assess the quality of their work.
 - A wide array of assessments such as DRA, end of unit tests, and pre and post performance tasks are used to monitor student progress. However, ongoing checks for student understanding by teachers during lessons are not evident. Few teachers incorporated questioning to clarify student understanding or misconceptions of lessons. Across classrooms the use of student discussions, guided practice activities or teacher conferences as structures to gain insight about student understanding of lessons is inconsistent. Therefore, checks throughout lessons to ensure students understand the content of lesson or task required are not a common practice. Thus, teachers’ ability to make effective and timely adjustments to either instruction or tasks to ensure student understanding and learning during lessons is hampered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 9 Ryer Avenue 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