

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The Wakefield School
Elementary School 016
4550 Carpenter Avenue
Bronx
NY 10470**

Principal: Yvonne Williams

Dates of review: October 25 - 26, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Wakefield School is an elementary school with 575 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 55% Black, 28% Hispanic, 3% White, 5% American Indian, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 10% 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 92.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school embraces a culture of mutual respect, which supports student and adult learning and ensures students' social and emotional needs are met. (1.4)
 - Parents, students, and staff describe the school as a safe and enjoyable place to work and learn. Students feel safe in and out of classrooms and say they would talk to their teachers, administrators, and support staff, including school aides and lunchroom personnel if they have a problem. Parents state they believe the faculty genuinely cares for their children's well being and learning needs. Teachers make themselves available before and after school to talk with parents. The school's guidance team and a partnership with a professional development organization have provided training for teachers on classroom strategies to help them address students' social emotional needs. As a result, teachers are prepared to facilitate conversations with students about how to handle conflicts and help them make good decisions, thus students say they are able to resolve issues in a positive manner with classmates and include their teachers as needed.
 - Regular bi-weekly meetings to address the needs of the schools' transient population allow the staff to target follow-up and outreach strategies to ensure that families are supported and students attend school regularly. Efforts include guidance and support staff calling homes to assess extenuating circumstances before absence patterns become excessive, and arranging support, such as home visits and counseling, that includes both the student and family members. As a result, attendance over the past three years has averaged 92% a significant increase from prior years of 85 to 87%.
- The leadership's goals for teaching and learning are informed by data and provide a plan to include the school community in the decision making process to support overall school improvement. (3.1)
 - The principal has clearly defined three areas of focus for school improvement: building teacher capacity around the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards implementation of at least two Common Core aligned tasks per grade, and improving teacher effectiveness across the school. These goals are represented in various action plans and communicated to teachers, parents, and students via several venues including the school's leadership team, faculty conferences, team meetings, assemblies, and parent association meetings. The leadership is also working with teachers and families to track how students are working towards their learning goals by studying student work products and following up with families on next steps for student growth. As a result, parents and staff agree that there is increased community buy in and interest in supporting the initiatives that are designed to improve student learning and achievement.

- The principal makes decisions to align key resources in ways that promote the achievement of school goals and support professional collaboration to strengthen instructional capacity. (1.3)
 - In light of budget limitations, the principal has organized a grant writing team this year, which is responsible for writing proposals to secure funding for supplementary arts programs and other resources for students and families. A partnership with an arts organization is providing music, drumming, and drama classes for grades 3-5 twice a week. Additionally, technology support for use in lessons is also a priority as evidenced by Smart Boards in every classroom and a new computer lab, which will be opening later this fall. These initiatives are increasing learning opportunities and extensions to the academic program for all learners.
 - Teachers' schedules are structured to allow time to meet two to three times per week for collaborative grade level planning, vertical planning teams across grades, content area professional development, and school wide inquiry. Teams led by teachers and administrators are focusing their work on the demands of the Common Core Standards, analyzing assessment results, and are beginning to align their work using protocols and structures for school wide decisions about instruction. As a result, there are many opportunities for teachers to improve instructional practice via data analysis, review of student work, and development of curriculum and lessons to improve student learning and achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that across grades and content areas, the integration of Common Core standards into curricula and academic tasks reflects support for diverse learners and results in cognitively engaging student work. (1.1)
 - A review of curriculum artifacts reveals a focus on reading and comprehending informational text, citing evidence from text as a basis for verbal answers and written responses, and the use of academic vocabulary in student work. In math, the school conducts gap analyses of current resources against the standards and attempts to ensure that the bridge standards and instructional shifts are addressed across grades, especially in the numbers and operations strand. Despite the thoughtful process to ensure CCLS alignment, lessons within units of study do not always include real world applications or meaningful situations students can refer to for understanding new concepts. Tasks are of low demand for many students, for example, requiring repeated computation for many similar problems. There is evidence in the written curriculum to indicate that teachers are expected to implement strategies that ensure multiple entry points and access for diverse learners as defined by Universal Design for Learning principles, but most lessons include review of prior material and are teacher directed for the whole class, limiting progress and acceleration of learning for many students.
- Strengthen teacher practice so that in all classrooms students are engaged in higher order thinking and appropriately challenging tasks and discussions. (1.2)

- The leadership has chosen to focus teacher feedback around the competency of questioning and discussion techniques, based on Danielson's framework, towards the goal of raising the level of rigor and thinking for all students in alignment with the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards. However, across classrooms questions are mostly lower level and lessons do not always address students' identified learning styles and needs. Most lessons in math focus on procedural fluency and computation in the upper grades and lead to minimal discussion or use of content area vocabulary by students. A clear focus on multiplication facts and fluency in upper grades leads to teaching out of context and minimal real world applications. In classrooms where students ask clarifying questions, which reflect gaps in their understanding, instructional adjustments by teachers are insufficient to address diverse learners' misconceptions. Similarly, English language learners, students with disabilities or higher achieving students who may have mastered particular concepts are not able to advance their learning during these lessons. In early childhood and literacy classes, lessons are supportive of partner talk, student participation, and student generated discussions. However, across the school, most classrooms did not allow students to discuss the context for assigned tasks, thus limiting student thinking and participation in higher order learning.
- Improve the alignment and use of assessment practices across classrooms and grades so that adjustments to instruction are timely and effectively meet students' diverse learning needs. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams meet frequently to discuss units of study, look at student work, and develop common rubrics and assessments aligned to the curriculum. Discussions often include teachers' noticings of strengths and needs within their own classrooms. However, this information does not lead to focused decisions about implementation or monitoring of specific instructional strategies to improve student learning based on identified skills gaps. As a result there are missed opportunities to develop timely, instructional adjustments or solutions and implement them over time to ensure that student learning is maximized across the school. Teachers use data from individual student conference summary sheets and collect information from a range of classroom assessments that inform small group instruction based on patterns of error in solving problems or responding to particular tasks. However, teachers' practices for checking for student understanding throughout lessons are inconsistent. For example, teachers ask, "Does everyone understand?" in one class, while in others, students are asked to paraphrase new ideas presented by classmates or teachers. These practices do not always lead to identification of needs of relevant subgroups including higher achieving learners, or special populations across grades, thus limiting opportunities to target support and advance learning for some students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Wakefield 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