

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Fordham Bedford Academy

Elementary School X054

**2703 Webster Ave.
Bronx, New York 10458**

Principal: Maribelle Nunez Pardo

Dates of review: December 18 – 19, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. / I.S. 54 is an Elementary school with 504 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 28% Black, 68% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 27% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 83.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and tasks have been designed to meet the diverse needs of learners. (1.1)
 - School leaders and faculty have spent a great deal of time aligning their curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and ensuring the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) is part of the school's focus. Foundational skills standards, specifically standards related to phonological awareness are key standards of focus for the early childhood grades. Analysis of data informs the focus standards for the school. Standards such as refer to details and examples in a text, and determining the main idea of a text and explaining how it is supported by key details drive the core of the work in reading informational texts. This has ensured that the design of performance and instructional tasks reflect the instructional shifts within the new standards. Collaboration with an outside consultant provides short leveled text to help build student reading stamina and gradually increase the level of text complexity. This practice supports the needs of all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Focus in writing has shifted to include writing throughout the day and now ensures that students produce a considerable amount of informational writing. The use of a balanced math approach has changed math instruction to ensure students are engaged in problem solving, conceptual understanding, reasoning and a focus on mathematical processes. As a result, this curriculum work ensures the school's focus is centered on key standards and supports all learners in developing rigorous habits.
 - Frequent analysis of student work results in teachers refining curricula and instructional tasks as needed. Teachers review student work and confer with students about their work on an ongoing basis. Review of data by school leaders and staff revealed students were immersed in too many units of study. As a result, school leaders and faculty decreased the number of instructional units. The focus shifted to quality, depth and breadth of the units rather than quantity. In addition, gender reading preferences were identified. Therefore, changes were made to text selections to assure engagement for all students. Adjustments to units include a variety of differentiated tasks, thus ensuring support for English language learners and special education students. These key adjustments have resulted in increased learning opportunities to cognitively engage all students.
- The school' culture of mutual respect promotes student and adult learning and supports students' social and emotional needs. (1.4)
 - The school's implementation of the "Rocket Program," a program designed to encourage positive student behaviors, has contributed to ensuring students treat each other with dignity and respect. Teachers model these behaviors and students articulate that teachers treat them with respect and "want them to learn." Student voices are honored at

student council sessions. Choice of activities is offered to the students once their work is completed. Recognizing the sense of urgency to increase reading performance levels, school leaders have assigned students as reading ambassadors to read while having lunch with the principal. The implementation of these school rituals has helped to ensure students demonstrate a positive attitude toward learning and they are well aware of and can practice the academic and social behaviors needed to be successful learners.

- Students state they feel safe in the school and know they can speak to their teachers, administrators and a variety of other staff members about their academic and personal concerns. Their teachers treat them like “college students.” Parents state that the faculty genuinely cares for their children’s well being. Teachers welcome parents to discuss their children’s strengths and challenges as well as their concerns and invite parents to sit in classrooms to learn with the children. The school’s social worker works with parents and teachers to increase their understanding of students’ social emotional needs and provides supports related to how to address them. Parents often reach out to this valued resource for advice and support. Consequently, parents and teachers support students’ social and emotional needs and students are better prepared to learn and succeed in school.
- Teacher teams engage in frequent structured collaborations to examine student work and make key decisions about curricula and teaching practices to support student learning. (4.2)
 - Teachers meet weekly in both vertical and horizontal teams to determine the efficacy of the units from one grade to another and ensure their continued alignment to CCLS. Norms to examine student work during structured inquiry sessions have been established. Teacher team collaboration and conversations about student work result in changes to curricula, materials used and teacher’s classroom practices. Greater clarity of a performance task and removal of specific student scaffolds to increase student independence were adjustments made to support student learning. Teachers state the collaborative process has also led to clarification around the use of rubrics to support student writing and the backward design planning of lessons, thus assuring strengthening teacher practice. Modifications to instructional tasks and rubrics are routine practices. Vertical teams have provided greater teacher insight around the expectations for each grade. For example, close examination of student work revealed in order for students to prepare for the rigor of performance tests, they needed increased opportunities to engage in on demand writing tasks. This structured process has resulted in school wide instructional coherence and consistency in teaching practices to support student learning.
 - Teachers have embraced the opportunity to work collaboratively at looking at student work and tailoring both curricula and teacher practice to meet student needs. They state this process has allowed them to take ownership of designing units aligned to CCLS and has also added validation to the contributions of all teachers. In response to the Learning Environment Survey (LES) results, school leaders have purposefully focused on empowering teachers and have encouraged them to take on leadership roles. Weekly meetings are facilitated by a grade leader or

teacher with a specific area of expertise. For example, since a fourth grade team was looking closely at student writing, the meeting was facilitated by the former literacy coach. Lead teachers at each grade level attend ongoing professional development sessions provided by the NYC Department of Education and guide the work of the teacher teams. Teacher documented low inference observations made about students guide teacher team work. Student work is reviewed and discussed, trends are examined and recommendations are made about either teacher practice or curricula. For example, teachers have adjusted their practice to ensure they frontload difficult vocabulary words at the beginning of each lesson. In addition, they have determined that guided reading must be a part of every instructional day. As a result of these collaborative process and decisions related to student work, teachers strengthen their leadership capacity and provide improved learning experiences for all students.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop teaching practices that promote student discussions, refine teacher questioning and provide multiple entry points for all students to engage in high levels of thinking. (1.2)
 - Teachers and school leaders continuing work on aligning curriculum to the CCLS ensures some of the instructional shifts required by the standards are addressed during lessons. However, teacher directed lessons limit the students from sharing their thinking. The use of structured protocols that encourage student collaborative conversations about their work are inconsistently practiced across classrooms. In most cases, students primarily discussed their work in partnerships, thus limiting the opportunities for students to engage in work related conversations and gain multiple perspectives, and opportunities that provide multiple entry points for English language learners and special education students to engage in collaborative conversations about their work is inconsistent. This limits student opportunities to be immersed in content rich conversations and to share and consider varying points of view. Students in one classroom were engaged in group discussion about why an author had selected a particular title for a chapter. In another classroom, students shared their thinking around the solution to math problems they had been given only with their teacher. The application of the agreed upon collaborative protocols that steep all students in meaningful dialogue in group conversations is not evident across classrooms. Consequently, student exchange of ideas and thinking is not yet a ritual, thus hindering the critical thinking experiences for students.
 - Teacher's questions did not evoke student thinking. Questions posed by teachers required a factual or yes/no response. In some cases teachers provided limited wait time for students to answer, thus limiting the opportunity for students to process a possible response. For example, students were asked questions which required students to consider a cause/effect relationship, however, they were not encouraged to discuss responses and before the students could respond, the teacher answered the question for the students. Teacher questions were not tailored to meet the diverse learning abilities or needs of students. Therefore, multiple entry points and appropriate scaffolds to support student work products for English language learners and special education students were not

evident, limiting these students from demonstrating higher order thinking skills.

- Enhance teacher's ability to consistently check for student understanding and support the use of rubrics in order to assist students in self-assessment. (2.2)
 - School leaders and faculty use Developmental Reading Assessment II (DRA 2) and are beginning to use Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to periodically assess student progress in reading. In addition to using network designed tools, this year the school has purchased a commercially created online assessment to monitor student progress in math. Teachers use rubrics to assess and analyze student work products. Students however, are just beginning to use rubrics to guide them in the completion of work products. Visits to classrooms reveal that in the upper grades, students are beginning to use rubrics as a tool to guide their work. However, early childhood students have yet to fully understand how to use the tool to support their work. As a result, not all students are able to monitor or guide their own learning. In addition, teachers' feedback to students across grades is inconsistent in that comments do not consistently align to the rubric or guide students on how to improve their work. Full application of rubrics is still developing, thus affecting the consistency of student understanding of the requirements of their learning in order to maximize their potential.
 - Teachers' practices to check for student understanding are inconsistent and do not always result in clarifying student misconceptions. For example, while in most classrooms intended student learning outcomes were evident, clear identification of whether students had actually achieved the lesson objectives was not determined. Teacher high level questions and student active engagement were not practices used to ascertain student understanding. For example, in a lesson about cause/effect writing the teacher posed the question, "what happens to students when they cheat on a test?" The teacher wrote response on the SMART board, however, students were not provided with a guided practice task or the opportunity for them to discuss their responses. Thus, the teacher was not able to determine if the students fully understood the concept of cause and effect or demonstrate the application of their learning. As a result of these missed opportunities, teachers were not able to make timely and effective adjustments during instruction in order to meet the learning needs of all students.
- Continue to develop systems that communicate high expectations to all stakeholders in order to position students on a path towards college or career readiness. (3.4)
 - School leaders articulate expectations to the staff grounded in the school's chosen research based framework. Faculty has embraced the Danielson's Framework and welcomes the timely feedback provided by the administration. Teachers are developing clarity around the student expectations that are needed to be college or career ready. The principal has expressed and staff state they understand that "reasoning, student learning process, student independence and high performance" are all key factors that ensure students are prepared for the 21st century. For example, during a content rich 4th grade lesson about the life of Native

Americans in the woodland areas of America, students were not provided with the opportunity to work collaboratively or discuss their work. In yet another classroom, students were asked to write about either a memorable event or important decision they had made. An opportunity for students to engage in processes where they could reason and share thinking were not provided. Therefore, there is inconsistency in the classroom practices that promote high expectations, and the supports for students to achieve them are not yet fully developed. Consequently, not all students benefit from instructional practices that support their path to college or career options.

- Students state they are aware of what the expectations are to attain grade level standards. They also express that sometimes “teachers try to make the work hard, but it is still easy.” Expectations of what it means or what is required to exceed the standards have not been clearly articulated to all students. Thus, opportunities for students, especially those performing at more advanced levels, to be challenged and excel beyond the standards are limited. As a result, not all students are encouraged to meet their full learning potential. In order to ensure parents are apprised of student expectations, school leaders and faculty communicate with families via parent bulletins, newsletters and parent book clubs. Curriculum nights are held to inform parents of curricula content. Parents express that while the school does communicate with them about curriculum and school events, information about the CCLS and “what it takes for their children to make it” is not provided for them. Therefore, systems that provide feedback to parents to help them better understand students’ progress toward meeting high expectations and the supports they can offer to guide their children’s learning, limits their ability to assist them in moving to higher levels of achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Fordham Bedford Academy	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