

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 055 Benjamin Franklin

Elementary

**450 SAINT PAUL'S PLACE
BRONX
NY 10456**

Principal: LUIS TORRES

**Dates of review: Nov 27, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Holly Reichert**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 055 Benjamin Franklin is an Elementary school with 672 students from pre-K through grade 5. The school population comprises 49.6% Black, 49.6% Hispanic, 0.3% White, and 0.3% Asian students. The student body includes 19.0% English language learners and 18.0% special education students. Boys account for 55.6% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44.4%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.11%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The deliberate use of resources to target and move the school in specific, focused areas has led to a shift in school culture positively affecting student learning. (1.3)
 - The school has organized teachers' programs so that they can meet regularly each week. Grade leaders and grade level teams meet for two periods a week: once to discuss curricula and planning and once to look at student work/data. Teachers expressed how this structured time to collaborate on planning and to look at student work and analyze data has led to improvements in their practice and student work products. One teacher stated that the work done around lifting the level of questioning during his grade level meetings has supported his shift in practice around how he asks questions resulting in a non-participatory student now responding at length and with interest. Another teacher stated that being able to share practice and engage with colleagues about how students are doing across the grades in reading and writing in relation to discussion about the curricula has raised her level of concern about using assessment data to address student learning needs and the process she uses to track student progress. As an outcome of teacher team work, she now focuses on differentiating instruction linked to assessment cycles to best meet student needs and track progress. As a result of structuring teacher time to allow for collaboration, teacher practice is shifting and student output is improving.
 - The school strategically assigned teachers and hired additional staff to address the school's instructional needs. To attend to the school's special education needs, an expert teacher in special education took on the role of IEP teacher and supports the school in all of its processes regarding this area; to support teachers and the English language learner population, the literacy coach was released from the classroom duties. Additionally, to sustain the school's students who have challenging behavior, a physical education teacher became the school's dean. Community associates have been hired to work with gender groups and conduct gang prevention work. The school was also able to hire a second school psychologist to meet the needs of their student population. As a result of these strategic hiring and teacher assignment decisions, the school is able to support its instructional goals and the specific needs of its student population.
- The school's approach to supporting the whole child by providing structures and services within the school to meet the needs of its student population has created a safe, inclusive learning environment for all. (1.4)
 - The school supports its children's academic, social-emotional, physical, and medical needs through the staff, services, and programs it offers. With positive behavior intervention systems (PBIS), the school has developed rituals, routines, and incentives that support positive student behavior and appropriate interaction with peers and adults. Gender-specific support groups, behavior intervention conferences, and school-

wide programs on bullying have led to students being able to communicate more effectively about what they are experiencing so that issues can be addressed. Parents said the school has come a long way and that it is much better now, describing PS 55 as "home, welcoming, comfortable", adding that the school provides services for the families who come to school. Here they specifically referenced the social service organization and medical clinic housed in the school to support its families. They added that, "other schools don't have what PS 55 has" citing especially the medical clinic to which dental services will be added in 2013. Parents participate in weekly walkthroughs and provide feedback to the principal about what needs to be improved. As a result, student behavior, arrival and dismissal procedures, as well as improvements to the building itself have resulted. For example, the school's clinic is under construction expanding to provide both the medical and dental services, and the school's technology is being upgraded to include Smart Boards in every classroom. Students said they like the school because of the good people and creatively colored walls. They also stated that they feel safe in school and that there is at least one adult who knows them and supports them. One student stated, "Everyone knows me and is kind to me." Another student shared how she participates in the wellness council, has learned about how to be healthy by eating well and being active, and that she has been able to share what she has learned with her classmates. The structured environment and additional social and medical services support students so that they come to school ready to learn and are supported during the day. The school attributes its attendance rate of 93% to its efforts to support the whole child. By focusing on the whole child, the school has created an environment that is stable, structured, and supportive.

- The school focuses on knowing every child, on making sure all children come to school, and on providing families with the needed social services and medical support they need so that their children can come to school consistently. Efforts to continually increase student attendance and achievement are evident in the school's Student Success Mentor Program in which eleven members of the staff support a specific caseload of students identified for the program due to attendance and other issues. One student that the guidance counselor currently mentors has improved attendance, from 84% in June 2012 to 93 percent in November 2012, and improved writing moving from approaching standards in June 2012 to meeting standards in November 2012. These increases are attributed to the meticulous outreach and follow-up done by the mentors. By knowing all the students and their needs, the school is able to provide the outreach needed to ensure each child comes to school.
- The school's articulated process for supporting teachers' professional growth with frequent cycles of observation utilizing a common framework provides feedback and next steps for moving up the levels of performance and delineates growth over time. (4.1)
 - School leaders review student performance data and visit classrooms to provide instructive feedback to support their teachers' on-going development. The feedback provided to teachers aligns to elements highlighted on the common framework the school utilizes as well as on a school created evidence checklist. This allows teachers to understand where their practice is on the continuum of performance and provides a

few areas in which to improve so that they can move up and long the continuum. Reviewing student data has underpinned cultural and instructional shifts at the school, and the on-going review of student performance data and its alignment to the common framework classroom observation focus areas is allowing the school to effectively make steady improvements in instruction. Parents highlighted one classroom teacher that turned around the behavior of her class. With the school's focus on managing behavior at the beginning of the year, and teachers provided with feedback to address management issues, the principal concurred that cases where this was an issue in September are no longer the case. The school attributes the improvement of teacher practice to the articulated process they have put in place.

- The school uses the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* to guide its work to support teacher development. Specifically, the school is focused on managing student behavior and using questioning and discussion techniques in its current classroom observation cycles. The administration uses the framework to provide evidence from the observation that aligns to specific feedback and next steps for the teacher. The written feedback is provided online and is continually updated with each subsequent visit highlighting movement and improvement from the previous visit. The online system communicates visually with color coding and in writing how the teacher is moving up the levels of performance. The school's use of Danielson to guide and deepen teacher practice is evident in teachers' conversations and work in teams and their reflections on their practice. The cycles of observation and feedback provided support teachers' growth and the school's focus on continually improving the management of student behavior and questioning and discussion techniques.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop and integrate CCLS aligned curricula across grades and subjects so that key standards are consistently emphasized and lead to increases in student performance. (1.1)
 - The school utilizes New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) curricular resources. Currently, all teachers are using informational text bundles from the Common Core Library. These bundles connect to the school's monthly theme of living things and connect to school-developed curricula in science and social studies. There is a calendar of units of study that includes units the school has been teaching with the CCLS aligned unit covered in November-December. Curriculum mapping aligned to key State standards and appropriate sequencing of units is being discussed in teacher teams. With the integration of CCLS curricula, standards and instructional shifts in its initial stages, implementation of the new curricula is leading to inconsistency in student mastery of key State standards as evidenced in student work products. As a result, integration of CCLS is uneven across the faculty limiting the school's capacity to increase student achievement.
 - Across the school, teachers provide students with questions that are leveled as per the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix. For example, in 3rd grade classrooms, students worked at tables with leveled questions. However, when speaking to students, they were not sure what the

question meant or how to answer the question. Student work samples showed attempts at responding to questions; however, responses showed that their understanding of the question and use of textual information was developing, and in some cases that they really did not understand the task. Even though teachers use academic tasks that ask students to respond to increasingly more challenging questions as per the school's use of DOK, understanding of what the questions are asking or how to answer them was inconsistent across classes. As a result, the use of higher level questions at specific times during the lesson did not consistently build on students' understanding of the text they were reading and the task in which they were engaged.

- Deepen pedagogical practice rooted in coherent shared beliefs about how students learn best and informed by a common framework that leads to meaningful student discussion and work products. (1.2)
 - Teachers are raising the level of questioning and creating student-centered activities connected to their work with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, students from two classes, including one sheltered for English language learners (ELL), worked together in groups to differentiate between what was relevant or irrelevant information in the text they are reading. ELLs and English proficient students were grouped to support English language development and academic oral language. Following the activity, students returned to their respective classrooms and there was no apparent follow-up regarding the work done collaboratively in groups. The teacher directed questions that followed did not specifically link back to, build upon, or check understanding of the work done in groups. Across classrooms, work done by students was not consistently focused on with specific end of lesson questions or shared and deepened by clear discussion routines following the activity. As a result, teaching practices focused on deepening the level of questioning and creating student centered classrooms was uneven across the school hindering the opportunities for students to demonstrate or question their understanding through interaction with peers regarding a text and task during and at the closure of the lesson.
 - The school follows the process of balanced literacy. Teachers provide direct instruction and model what they want their students to know and be able to do. Students then have time to try out the task themselves with the support and coaching of the teacher during conference time. While this process is articulated in the flow of the lesson, appropriate scaffolds and access for all learners were not evident. Some student needs were not addressed with support and coaching appropriate at the learner's level. Consequently, the effectiveness of instructional routines and use of scaffolding and coaching support are uneven across classrooms which hinders the school's ability to close the achievement gap.
 - The school is engaged in developing high level questioning in order to facilitate student engagement and participation. While teachers are planning with higher level questioning in mind and are matching the questions they develop to the DOK matrix, the execution of their questions did not allow wait time for students to think before responding, and a consistent process has not been routinized for peer interaction. As a result, students are inconsistently being cognitively engaged in their thinking and discussion with peers.

- Ensure that teacher teams and individual teachers develop curricula-aligned assessment practices that inform instructional decisions and address student needs in order to increase student mastery of key State standards. (2.2)
 - The school uses unit specific rubrics to assess writing. While each unit of study that culminates in a writing task is assessed with a specific rubric, alignment of the task expectations with the standards and criteria of the rubric are not clear and the language of the rubrics provided to students do not use age/grade level appropriate language. With this lack of clear alignment and student appropriate language, teachers provide feedback that is limited in its capacity to consistently move students to the next level. As a result, teachers and students do not have a clear idea of their strengths and areas of growth and teachers are not able to accurately address learning needs.
 - At the school, many teachers check for understanding by asking for ‘a thumbs up’ following an assessment question during whole class instruction and conference with students during independent and group practice. Even though there are routines in place at the school for checking for understanding, the efficacy of supporting student learning needs and accurately addressing misunderstandings during the lesson was not evidenced in student work samples. Checks for understanding were inconsistent and insufficient to meet all student needs as teachers did not make the needed adjustments to instruction. Consequently, the school's practices of assessing student learning during lessons lead to uneven levels of student understanding and mastery of standards.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name:	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