

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Max Shoenfeld

Public School X70

1691 Weeks Avenue

Bronx

NY 10457

Principal: Kerry Castellano

Dates of review: April 29-30, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Max Shoenfeld is an elementary school with 1,369 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 23% Black, 74% Hispanic, 0% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school cultivates a very supportive and inclusive culture that enhances the academic and personal development of staff and students. (1.4)
 - The leadership and staff have developed a supportive learning environment for students. “We build a culture where everyone works together” is the principal’s motto for collaboration. The school emphasizes positive behavior through incentives where students receive tickets and then participate in weekly assemblies called “gotcha jams”. Students state that the assemblies are a lot of fun. In addition, they are able to attend trips that reinforce positive exemplary behavior such as self-regulation. When walking through the hallways, multiple exhibits display current themes that students are studying, such as fairy tales in the lower grades and mythology in the upper grades. Consequently, students show great pride in their work and articulate positive learning experiences with their in decisions that can make regarding the various choices given for their projects. These continuous improvement efforts in developing skills that cultivate trust and positive attitudes support the academic and personal growth of all learners.
 - The support staff meets regularly to discuss students that are at risk for academics and/or social-emotional needs. Counselors and social workers attend grade meetings with teachers to coordinate social-emotional learning and follow up with families. The administrative team shares information regularly to ensure that students receive appropriate supports before, during and after school. Some of these supports to develop literacy include teaching strategies that build on reading comprehension such as summarizing, sequencing and inferencing. Students are proud to share their progress. As a result, there have been less referrals and incidents reported this year resulting in a reduction of suspensions. Attendance has also improved from 91 to 92% in a school of 1369 students.
- The principal effectively uses resources that align to the school’s goals, resulting in meaningful student work products. (1.3)
 - This year, the school invested in partnerships to support curriculum development in reading and writing as well as professional development opportunities for staff and administration through Teacher’s College. The school uses additional consultants for reading and writing effectively. The focus of the consultants’ work is to build the expertise and capacity of the teachers to lead this work across the various grade levels, especially in the area of writing. Teacher leaders meet regularly to identify best practices by looking at student work samples and making instructional adjustments in their curriculum to support the shifts in literacy. To this end, many non-fiction libraries were purchased and evident in classrooms, to support the school’s goal to improve literacy. As a result, students are writing about more non-fiction topics such as rainforests and biographies evident in student folders and notebooks.

- The principal has effectively hired staff to support the individual needs of students especially in the area of special education. Additionally, the administrative team is well-balanced to include expertise with specialties in teaching and learning of English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD). Each administrator reviews the work of subgroups with teacher leaders and consultants to insure that they have access to resources that enable them to meet specific targets in support of the school's goals. These are reviewed closely throughout the school year with the cabinet and school's leadership team. For example, one of the administrators works closely with the support staff to align the resources for students who are at risk academically. Additional small group instruction and counseling is provided for these students during and after-school and their progress is carefully monitored by teachers and administration. In addition, the school reaches out to parents to make sure that they are informed about the progress of their children so that proper adjustments are made throughout the year. As a result, the teachers and administration work closely to provide supports and interventions with flexible schedules in order to close the achievement gap.
- Across classrooms, teachers create assessments that align to the curricula and analyze data to make periodic adjustments of curricula and at the classroom level. (2.2)
 - The school has a vertical, enthusiastic and proactive writing teacher team that represents the various grade levels and subgroups of students. This team meets regularly to review writing data and samples from their units of study and Common Core tasks. During these meetings, they surface gaps and discuss trends in writing and strategies for improvement. For example, they noticed that student writing samples lack relevant details that support student claims. To address this skill deficit, the team shared best practices and realigned rubrics, checklists and teaching points for mini-lessons. Teachers state that there are noted improvements in student writing from the mid-year writing assessments to present samples of student work. Furthermore, the lower grades focus on developing academic vocabulary to support writing. During classroom visits, early childhood classrooms had an abundance of writing samples in fiction and non-fiction writing, with actionable feedback to guide students during their revision process such as "adding more details to describe the characters in my stories...", as one student shared. The units of study have also been revised to reflect the specific needs that they are finding through this analysis. For example, the writing units have been revised to include guiding questions, rubrics and checklists that require students to elaborate on their writing across genres. The writing team is in the process of updating their Writing Guide to include information on the findings of the Common Core tasks and grade level patterns and trends. Teachers find this book quite useful as a resource that provides guidance for grade level writing aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- The leadership supports teacher development through regular cycles of classroom observations and review of student data that promote professional growth and reflection. (4.1)

- The administrative team created a system to provide pedagogical guidance and support to teachers using elements of the Danielson Framework. Each teacher receives feedback from various administrators in an effort to norm best practices, interpretation of the framework and feedback across the school. In response to strengths and challenges that surface during observations, including a review of student work products, new teachers have mentors and consultants that work with them closely to develop their content knowledge and pedagogy and is coupled with feedback and guidance from administration on classroom management, differentiation and reviewing goals as next steps to improve their practices. A review of the observations and informal feedback samples indicate alignment with the school's stated goals on questioning, planning and writing across content areas. Teachers state that administrative feedback is helpful because it is specific to their needs and is timely. A review of teacher observations also indicates the progress that teachers are making and also articulates clear expectations for development and improvement aligned to the school's professional development plan. In addition, there are instructional resources and support available for staffs such as mentors, consultants, grade leaders and professional literature which promote collegial, academic conversations and results in improved teaching practices and reflection highlighted during grade meetings.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the rigor and quality of academic tasks aligned to CCLS to effectively challenge all students and close the achievement gap. (1.1)
 - The school has made a thoughtful investment with Teacher's College in an effort to align their curriculum to the CCLS and address the instructional shifts. However, this work is just beginning to evolve as teachers are beginning to develop tasks that emphasize rigorous habits across the grades. During classroom visits, tasks and texts were inconsistently rigorous and did not always emphasize critical thinking skills. For example, in some classrooms with English language learners, teachers ask questions about facts and opinions using low-level texts, thus limiting the opportunities for rich discussions and inquiry. Students were compliant and involved, but not cognitively engaged using higher order thinking to tackle tasks. Furthermore, many assignments were skill-based with a focus on literal questioning techniques and did not provide students with scaffolds that target the different learning styles that would enable them to access rigorous content. During classroom visits, tasks generally did not allow for multiple points of entry for all learners. Therefore, missing opportunities to provide appropriate extensions and interventions, based on student needs, is reflected in the reading and writing data on the most recent Progress Report and formative assessments that included school-based rubrics and goals' templates to track progress in student writing across the year for individual students.
- Develop pedagogical skills that promote academic rigor and meet the needs of all learners especially ELL and SWD students. (1.2)
 - Teachers use a workshop model throughout the school to address specific elements of the Danielson Framework that intends to target

student needs. Although the school collects and reviews more data this year, especially for reading and writing, they have not yet used it to sufficiently target student learning needs effectively. For example, during grade meetings teachers review writing data and samples, and make adjustments in their units in an effort to better address individual needs. In the classrooms they sometimes group students during their lessons and organize guided reading groups. However, teaching practices do not consistently provide the necessary supports that students need in order to excel to the next level. Many ELL students are not cognitively engaged and sometimes do not have sufficient supports to use during the lessons to revise their work with instructional tools. In some classrooms, students are attempting to complete the tasks without criteria for tasks, manipulatives or guiding questions that will assist students with accessing the content being taught. Some lessons lack the explicit instruction and think-alouds that can assist ELLs with strategies to understand text at the literal level to the interpretive or applied level of reading. Many students in classrooms rely on their teachers to check their work or give directions, therefore missing opportunities to build student independence with accessible rubrics, checklists or discussions with their peers. As a result, student writing samples that are of high quality and volume are not consistently abundant across the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Max Shoenfeld PS 070X	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