

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 108 Phillip J. Abinanti

Elementary School 108

1166 Neill Avenue

Bronx

NY 10461

Principal: Charles Sperrazza

Dates of review: April 29, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 108 Phillip J. Abinanti is an Elementary school with 586 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 10% Black, 45% Hispanic, 33% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has strategically integrated higher order learning tasks across the curricula and refined learning tasks so that the resulting instruction engages all students. (1.1)
 - Higher order thinking is continually emphasized in all classes and content areas via questioning and inquiry-based learning embedded across curricula. As a result of rigorous and coherent instruction, academic tasks embedded across grades and subject areas, tiered domain specific vocabulary, Depth of Knowledge (DOK) leveled questions, conferencing, use of technology, surveys, and hands-on projects, the school is closing the achievement gap for all students, including students with disabilities and second language learners. Throughout the school year, teacher teams meet weekly to continue to refine their work, critically analyze the degree of challenge of performance tasks prior to a unit of study, projects, other common assessments and their alignment with the taught curricula. As a result of ongoing refinement of tasks and adjustments to integrated unit plans, students have shown improvement in their informational writing, as evidenced in their unit assessment Interim data as compared to the pre-assessment administered at the beginning of the year.
- Teaching practices promote high levels of thinking and provide multiple entry points for all learners including ELLS and SWDs aligned to a school wide belief system. (1.2)
 - Strong beliefs about how students learn best are consistent across classrooms. Classroom learning environments in all grade levels are structured so they are directed by student initiated inquiry where students raise and initiate their own questions as they explore relevant themes and topics in their units of study. Many lessons and group tasks center on real life and problem solving applications that provide multiple entry points for a variety of learners. Students are provided with tailored materials, such as tiered specific vocabulary lists, graphic organizers to work through their tasks and are expected to articulate the “how” and “why” of their answers. Teachers clearly use the workshop model methodology with mini lesson, modeling and independent practice in all classrooms, data-driven flexible groupings for instruction are evident and lessons and tasks are rigorous. For example, in one 5th grade math classroom, the teacher utilized a tiered lesson to teach the order of operations. During independent practice, students worked in groups evaluating a numerical expression containing more than one operation. Students experienced success as evident by their answers. They were able to repeat the order of operations rule, and restate how they learned that applying the rules of the order of operations helps them do computations in the correct order. As a result, student work products, including those of English language learners and students with individualized education plans, demonstrate engagement in higher order thinking. In addition, extension activities that stretch the thinking of higher achieving students were evident across grades and subjects.

- The principal makes key decisions around the budget, assignments and scheduling, aligned to the school's instructional goals to increase learning for all students. (1.3)
 - The principal's strong belief in closing the achievement gap while maintaining high expectations underpins the school's organizational structures and creative use of resources. Consequently, the bulk of school funding is channeled toward high quality, direct services to students that result in consistent progress in reading levels as evidenced in Reading Assessment benchmark data. For example, a review of Reading Assessment benchmark data from September, January, and February indicates consistent progress in students' guided and independent reading levels. Additionally, the school has made an investment in a Literacy Coach, and three intervention teachers to provide school-wide strategic interventions, in an effort to encourage student achievement and close the achievement gap. As a result of small group instruction, tiered lesson plans and weekly monitoring, intervention teachers report that 92% of the 108 students initially identified in the first cycle met their learning goals as measured by Aimsweb assessment data.
 - Teacher assignments and student groupings are strategic as seen in the Response to Intervention groups (RTI) and Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes on each grade. Consequently, students receive interventions or enrichment in a rich learning environment and benefit from the challenges to achieve at a high level. A variety of collaborative teams hold substantial meetings, 2-3 times per week to strengthen student work by examining assessment results at the end of each unit, refine performance tasks so that individual students and groups of students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, are challenged and engaged. As a result of these strategic decisions, time on task is optimized for the entire school community who share a responsibility for cohorts of students, which has resulted in improved student outcomes as evidenced by comparative assessment data which shows a 3% increment in ELA. Additionally, the rate of initial referrals to Special education has been reduced from 16 students last year to 4 students this year, thus the school projects referral rate to decrease by 50% as compared to last year's.
- The school is a very safe place which cultivates a respectful culture for all constituents, where students are known and appreciate the high level of support they receive that fosters their personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - The school's educational team shares the vision that a positive school-wide culture that celebrates learning and ensures that the social-emotional needs of every student are met results in high academic expectations and students ready for college and careers. Students actively participate in shaping school wide decisions, thereby bolstering their self -esteem and the development of their leadership skills. Input from the student government resulted in raising money for Penny Harvest, and a Community Food Drive. Strategic partnerships, such as strong connections with military and veterans through "Adopt a Soldier", Veteran's Day celebrations, Project "Boost" and YMCA result in students enhancing their academic and personal behaviors.

- Parents, students and staff unanimously agree that the school fosters a healthy and safe climate where students' social emotional and academic needs are readily addressed. This results in a culture where safety incidents are minimal and perfect attendance is recognized and celebrated monthly thus enabling students to focus on their academic growth. The school's inclusive culture, allows students to be well known by staff who support their academic and social growth. School guidance Counselors provide well-delivered professional development to staff on the implementation of Respect for All lessons, attendance support staff coordinates monthly attendance award ceremonies and lunch clubs are run by both guidance counselors and social workers to address emotional needs of at risk-students. These supports are deeply embedded in school culture and students and parents appreciate that they can turn to the principal, teachers and members of the pupil personnel team to help resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with learning. As a result, students report that they "feel safe" and are able to focus more on their academic achievement.
- Teachers collaborate on designing and modifying common grade-wide, unit aligned assessments, with ongoing checks for comprehension, resulting in interventions to positively impact student achievement. (2.2)
 - Teachers design their own pre, interim, and end-of unit assessments and writing prompts in English language Arts that are aligned with CCLS, thus allowing for connections to standard -based work in order to support student mastery of college and career readiness skills. To support student mastery of goals, all teachers utilize rubrics to grade students' work, and conference notes are reviewed to note strengths and needs relative to learning targets set by the CCLS. As a result, teachers are able to track and understand students' progress relative to the rubric which are in alignment with the State standards, therefore, are able to provide relevant written feedback to students to increase their achievement levels ,as well as evaluate and revise instruction. Teachers conduct ongoing checks for student understanding during lessons using strategies such as, Restate-Answer-Detail-Detail (R.A.D.D), as observed in most of the classes visited. In addition, students conduct self-assessments using exemplars and CCLS aligned rubrics to further gain feedback on their progress toward their next goals. This ensures their alignment with the taught curricula, and allows for regular discussion of student learning needs to ensure that all students, including students with individualized education plans, are challenged and engaged.

What the school needs to improve

- Build upon the classroom observation and feedback process to ensure closer alignment to the common teaching framework to inform professional development to promote teachers' growth. (4.1)
 - While the administration provides teachers with verbal and informal written feedback aligned to a research based framework, this process is infrequently done, as evidenced in documents that reflect informal written comments once per month. In addition, the recommended next steps in written observation reports are not consistently aligned to the evaluation tool and feedback is not suitably effective as it doesn't cite evidence from

student work, instructional practices or other data sets. As such, teachers do not consistently receive actionable feedback, thus resulting in missed opportunities to accelerate teacher growth.

- Teachers participate in external and internal professional development opportunities. However, school leaders do not yet consistently use observation data to drive professional development options for individual teachers to support their growth. Consequently, the absence of an ongoing system using data from observation reports to make informed decisions for individual teacher growth, limits information available to the administration to make informed tenure assignment, and retention decisions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Phillip J. Abinanti	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