

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Arthur A. Schomburg
Elementary School 163**

**2075 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Dilsia Martinez

Dates of review: February 13 - 14, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Arthur A. Schomburg is an elementary school with 584 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 32% Black, 65% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian, and 1% other students. The student body includes 39% English language learners and 16% 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 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a safe and highly nurturing environment with multiple support systems that promote improvement in students' personal and academic growth. (1.4)
 - Each school day at 9:30AM there are announcements to build community as a student leads peers in reciting a pledge that is posted all over the school, thus insuring ongoing awareness of desirable behaviors. In addition, teachers support students by implementing character education lessons and providing extra tutoring for the most at-risk students. For example, a Caring School Community curriculum and Heartwood character education modules guide all students towards acceptable behaviors. Teachers report that they are treated respectfully and students indicate that they have a voice in decision-making, in that there are opportunities to meet with the principal to discuss school issues, such as the need for physical education and more after school programs. As a result, the school has created an inclusive atmosphere in which staff, students, and families engage in learning activities that are centered on students' social and academic well-being and, according to the principal, lead to improved student performance on unit assessments, and less incidents of misconduct than in the previous years.
 - There are several school teams that address the social and emotional needs of students, with the result that students are well known to all staff and have a "room for refuge", according to one support team staff member. The Response to Intervention (RTI) team works with other staff and community partners such as East Tremont library, Learning Leaders and New York City Parent Academy, to improve students' performance and provide families with information about their children's work and learning needs. The special education team collaborates with a part time social worker, English as a second language (ESL) teachers, intervention services providers, and guidance counselors, to implement services for students with disabilities. The attendance team monitors student attendance, follows up with families to address any medical, social, or emotional needs, and partners with Bronx Health Link and the Police Athletic League who help support this aspect of the school's work. This comprehensive approach and coordination of services help strengthen students' well-being and contribute to ongoing improvement in student attendance, with an average weekly attendance of 94% to date.
- The school has implemented an assessment system that enables teachers to identify students' needs and provide data driven interventions to promote student progress towards mastery of learning goals. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams meet regularly to analyze performance assessment data and other grade, class, and individual performance indicators for students. Teachers use rubrics and data from online assessments linked to units of study, to collect data and then disseminate information to other staff, students, and families. A school wide grading policy ensures that teachers and students are receiving appropriate feedback. Grade

meetings focus on lesson planning to address needs as identified by ongoing data analyses. As a result, the school's focus on assessment practices provides feedback that is beginning to inform planning and delivery of instruction to positively impact the achievement of all learners.

- The school's investment in the I-Ready and Fountas and Pinnell assessment programs allows teachers to have ongoing access to data from common assessments in math and English language arts. Through item analyses, teachers are able to determine the progress of individual students in meeting learning goals. In addition, through collaborative meetings, teachers share performance data with each other and then conference with students to assess mastery of skills and share the data with them. Teachers also use ARIS Learn data to plan lessons that re-teach concepts as needed. As a result, adjustments to curriculum and instruction are beginning to illustrate teachers' use of data to accelerate learning for students.
- Teacher teams collaborate to share best practices to promote increased teacher capacity in designing effective instruction and insuring high levels of targeted support for students. (4.2)
 - Across grades and content areas, inquiry teams meet weekly on Mondays, with a focus on the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into units of study. Teams review curriculum maps, develop pacing calendars, and design learning tasks, as they focus on what students need to know. Discussions of individual students, as well as patterns and trends in learning related to a given unit, topic or assessment, enable teachers to determine next steps, as they take turns sharing ideas for improvement in their practice and student mastery of learning goals. Staff also evaluate curriculum materials and identify resources to support the school's goals for improving student achievement. Consequently, emerging practices such as identifying changes needed in teacher practice and establishing benchmarks, are evident as supports for improved instruction across classrooms.
 - Coaches have the opportunity to shadow school leaders to develop their skills at looking at the school holistically in order to make professional development decisions, thus being supported by the school leaders in building capacity and taking ownership of their own growth. Further, by working with network curriculum specialists, including a writing team, the math and reading coaches, are empowered to share best practices with other staff and take responsibility for turnkeying information at the school level. Other teacher leaders participate in network professional development activities, which are also shared with other staff during team meetings. Specifically, the RTI team helps to coordinate professional development related to the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. Thus via collaborative planning, teachers are engaged in activities that enable them to make instructional decisions that are beginning to impact student performance, as evidenced by data from Fountas and Pinell assessments that show growth in independent reading levels for many students.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance the work on designing curricula that engages students in rigorous units of study emphasizing school's key standards in all subject areas, to promote college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - The school is focusing on teacher questioning and student engagement, to move teachers towards designing curricula that is aligned to chosen standards. The Teacher Effectiveness Team, including administrators, met during the summer to examine CCLS and create teaching points for lessons across content areas. They analyzed performance tasks to discover what skills students need to complete them. However, although the school is beginning to align curriculum maps to the CCLS, there is minimal focus on social studies and science and teachers are struggling to incorporate the instructional shifts in unit plans across all content area. One teacher noted that teachers are, "just learning about the shifts" so there is uncertainty about what to teach. As a result, curricula do not consistently reflect alignment with key standards and the instructional shifts, hindering instruction that promotes college and career readiness for all learners.
 - Lesson plans show tasks that indicate that students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, will participate in text-based discussions and activities that activate prior knowledge and impart higher learning skills. However, there are lesson plans that also show tasks that require students to copy notes for most of the class period and units of study that do not reflect close attention to activities that offer students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their thinking, via engagement in more challenging learning activities. As a result, the school's curricula does not consistently prioritize academic assignments that require all students, to develop higher order thinking skills and adopt rigorous habits to support their learning across content areas.
- Further develop teacher pedagogy around effective questioning, and consistent implementation of rigorous tasks to elevate thinking and the quality of work products by all learners. (1.2)
 - School leaders use a research-based framework to inform teacher practice, with specific focus on planning, preparation, and questioning. Teachers are encouraged to use the workshop model of instruction, flexible grouping, and differentiation of instruction, to insure learning by all students. However, across classrooms, instruction does not yet reflect a shared belief on how students learn best. For example, in one classroom students were engaged in responding to a thoughtful and provocative series of questions in a turn and talk activity, while in other classrooms lessons consisted primarily of teacher talk, with limited opportunities for students to be engaged. Teaching practices do not yet fully reflect that teachers share a common understanding of students' learning styles and how to best incorporate and align strategic practices with curricula, to maximize student learning.

- Although some teachers use the Hess Cognitive Matrix and Depth of Knowledge continuum to examine rigor of tasks, classroom discussions and student work do not demonstrate engagement of students in complex tasks. Across the school, there is little evidence of classroom instruction that extends critical thinking and problem solving skills. Further, student portfolios vary in the quality of student work products. To date, some portfolios have evidence of only three to four samples of student work. Others have mainly worksheets, graphic organizers, and little authentic writing. Thus work products indicate that some students are not consistently engaged in lessons that promote higher order thinking.
- Refine feedback from observations to incorporate actionable next steps linked to needs and professional development plans for individual teachers, to accelerate teacher growth school wide. (4.1)
 - School leaders focus on seven specific competencies of the Danielson Framework, including designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques and differentiation of instruction. The principal and assistant principal conduct formal and informal classroom observations and use the ARIS observation tracker to document observation data linked to those domains. Feedback, including next steps, informs teachers of the quality of their work and the school receives network support to address identified areas of need. However, feedback does not accurately target individual teacher's needs, nor is professional development differentiated to focus on those needs. Further, there is little evidence of mechanisms to insure that teachers follow up on recommendations, with one teacher stating that she does "not know how to fix the problem" noted on her observation report. As a result, there is a lack of feedback that delineates clear expectations for improved teacher development across the school.
 - Due to the school's participation in the Teacher Effectiveness Program, the network provides year round support for professional development activities for staff. Teacher observation data is shared with school based coaches and a talent coach funded by the Department of Education, works with school staff to plan and implement professional development activities for teachers. There are also teacher leaders who are supported by network staff and Department of Education collaboratives to provide support in areas in need, through hands-on coaching, workshops, and team discussions. However, the principal notes that there is "no formal professional development plan" and, according to one staff member, participation in some professional activities is based on "a first-come first - served" approach, enabling the first few people to respond to an email about a workshop to be the ones selected the to participate. Thus, not all staff members are provided relevant and sufficient opportunities to engage in professional development activities, leading to uneven levels of professional growth schoolwide.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Arthur A. Schomburg	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