

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P186X Walter J. Damrosch School

K-12 all grades 75X186

**750 JENNINGS STREET
BRONX
NY, 10459**

Principal: AVA CARA KAPLAN

**Dates of Review: Apr 9, 10, 11, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Barbara Joseph**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P186X Walter J. Damrosch School is a/an K-12 all grades school with 608 students from grade 1 through grade 12. The school population comprises 38.0% Black, 54.0% Hispanic, 3.0% White, and 1.0% Asian students. The student body includes 27 % English language learners and 100.0% special education students. Boys account for 75.0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 25.0%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 82.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Coherent curricula aligned to the CCLS and identified key standards offers opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous learning experiences resulting in improved student outcomes. (1.1)
 - The school utilizes units of study from the Common Core Library that are further adapted for grade bands by teacher teams to address the learning needs of students in standardized instruction, who are functioning below grade level due to their disability. In addition, the school uses the Unique Learning System, a curriculum containing units of study aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students in alternate assessment. The Unique Curriculum is supported with the use of assistive technology and manipulatives to provide access to the curriculum and learning for students along a range of cognitive abilities. This literacy based program is infused with themes across content areas and is differentiated based on the cognitive entry levels for students in alternate assessment programs. This month's theme, "Government", was incorporated into classroom activities to support the development of communication along with reading and writing tasks to build skills aligned to each student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). One student used the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to write sentences pertaining to plants being grown in the class, while other students wrote the sentence using word cards or writing tools. Vocabulary across classrooms, including cluster subjects all incorporated this theme and reinforced the vocabulary with visual supports and hands on materials. A set of common core aligned grade band rubrics are used consistently across the school to analyze student work in classrooms and at teacher team meetings in order to make the appropriate instructional curricular adjustments to increase student learning. Preparation for post-secondary outcomes is integrated into all curriculum and classroom instruction for every grade. The impact of refining academic tasks and the use of a curriculum that targets literacy across content areas, has resulted in an increase in reading and communication skills, specifically phonics and word study as evidenced by an average gain of 1.6 reading levels across the school as well as an increase in communication skills for students with the most significant intellectual disabilities as measured by the Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) and daily monitoring by teachers.
- The school's coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best is reflected in differentiated teacher practices that lead to progress for all students. (1.2)
 - The workshop model provides all students multiple entry points for learning along a continuum of cognitive ability as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FfT) and is evident across all classrooms as an integral part of the school's structured learning environment. This structure engages children in whole class, small group instruction and independent work that move students along a continuum of independence, while teaching both functional and academic skills. The use of formative and benchmark assessments such as SANDI, Fontas

and Pinnell, Unique, Everyday Math and Math in Focus (MIF), in conjunction with the consistent use of the school developed benchmark folder system to measure monthly progress of IEP goals, provides teachers with the ability to differentiate instruction and group students appropriately. Modeling is used consistently in all classrooms to reinforce targeted skill development and paraprofessionals work collaboratively with teachers to provide direct instruction as indicated on students' IEP's. The administration supports the integration of related service providers and teachers of English language learners to support instruction. They also support the development of skills across all learning environments, to engage all students in appropriate higher order thinking tasks. For example, in one class, students were engaged in a variety of literacy lessons with a community gardening theme based on their functional levels from identifying letters and sounds using individual communication systems to writing sentences. The school has a core belief that students' access learning in a variety of ways using different modalities. Across classrooms, student learning is supported through the use of manipulatives, visuals, and assistive technology to access curriculum and instruction. Students with significant intellectual disabilities, who are non-verbal, all have communication systems in place to develop communication skills, socialization and self-advocacy. As a result, work products, specifically writing tasks, for students with significant emotional challenges and intellectual disabilities have improved along a developmental continuum.

- All stakeholders are committed to support the academic, functional, and social emotional needs of students in an environment where they are well known, resulting in improved outcomes. (1.4)
 - The social - emotional supports provided to all students are deeply rooted in the culture and vision of the entire school community where every student is valued and encouraged to believe in themselves and their potential. Every student is known by more than one adult due to the school's programs that offer specialized ratios of 12:1:1, 12:1:4 and 8:1:1, as well as the support services provided to students both programmatically and individualized as per IEP's, such as counseling, occupational therapy and speech and language services. The school utilizes a school wide "Be a STAR", Positive Behavior Instructional Support Program (PBIS) across all its sites to reinforce appropriate behavior and choices while promoting the development of personal behaviors to prepare students to be productive members of their community. As part of the PBIS program, school counselors are integrated into classroom instruction and collaborate with teachers to formulate and implement group activities with students to identify their strengths, communicate their feelings through words and establish personal goals for improving self concept and behavior. Students can speak about the school's point system used to provide intrinsic reinforcement and extrinsic rewards. Administration disseminates a ladder of referral to set clear expectations with staff on protocols to be followed when supporting students with challenging behaviors and parents are informed of student progress through the use of the Interim Reporting System (IRS). This system, in addition to daily communication logs, informs families every six weeks of their child's academic, social-emotional progress, attendance and current behavior trends. All teachers are trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) strategies to assist students with the de-escalation of "at risk" behavior when they are in

crisis. Partnerships with the local Police Precinct and Sound View Mental Health Facility, in addition to monthly parent workshops at the school, are providing opportunities for families and students to receive additional support and guidance, especially in strategies to promote appropriate behavior at home and in the community. Consequently, there has been more than a 10% decrease in incidents due to student behavior as compared to last year and a significant increase in the percentage of students articulating at the end of the school year to a less restrictive environment within and outside District 75.

- Across the school assessments and rubrics aligned to standards and curricula with ongoing checks are used to inform instructional decisions to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - The school uses a variety of academic, functional and behavioral assessments for students with a diverse range of cognitive abilities in standardized and alternate assessment. The SANDI is used to assess all students with intellectual disabilities which provides information on each students' present level of performance and targets IEP goals which are connected to key standards in reading, foundational skills and speaking and listening. The use of the Unique Learning System, with built in assessments, enables teachers to adapt materials based on student's learning targets and functioning levels. The use of Ed Performance and the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarking System for students in standardized instruction gives teachers the ability to target gaps in learning across grades. The school has instituted an on-line Interim Reporting System (IRS) which provides data to administration and teachers every 6 weeks on academic and social / emotional growth and patterns of students' need by class, enabling teachers, administration and the guidance department to analyze behavioral and academic trends to provide the necessary intervention for students at risk. The analysis of student data and work has surfaced gaps with phonics development and word study, leading to the administration's decision to also implement a Response to Intervention (RtI) team. This team meets on a weekly basis to target specific strategies to use across classrooms based on the inquiry analysis of targeted student work samples and data. The school's literacy coach works directly with teacher teams to utilize the common core bundles and associated rubrics for students across grade bands to meet the citywide expectations, while adapting materials to provide entry points for students functioning below grade level. The use and analysis of this assessment information across student classifications has resulted in instruction which is addressing the citywide expectations as well as maintaining the integrity of each student's IEP to ensure students progress along a developmental and academic continuum to support increased learning.
 - The administration, in collaboration with teachers and related service providers, has created the *Benchmark Folder Checklist* system across all sites for every student; in order to monitor progress of student goals and objectives on an interim basis, make adjustments to instruction and updates to each student's IEP, when appropriate. In addition, teachers use daily checklists to monitor incremental progress based on the specific criteria aligned to IEP objectives. The use of the school wide CCLS aligned rubric in addition to teacher conferencing, via a variety of student

self assessment rubrics based on cognitive levels, has empowered every student to take ownership of their learning. Students are able to articulate with enthusiasm what they are learning and the goals they need to continue to work on the rest of the school year. In the small student meeting, students were eager to share their work samples and discuss the difference between an opinion and an argument, as well as their challenges with identifying the main idea. As a result of the consistent use of benchmark checklists, the analysis of daily data collection tools and student work, teachers are able to check for understanding and make instructional decisions at the classroom and teacher team level to improve student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand teachers' professional collaborations around data inquiry and looking at student work to strengthen instructional capacity in supporting student progress. (4.2)
 - The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional learning collaborations on teams. Teacher teams for students in standardized instruction, consistently look at student work and data using a prescribed protocol. However, not all teacher teams who work with students in alternate assessment are using a protocol for looking at student work and data in the same way to make informed instructional decisions. Consistent structures have yet to be developed across the entire organization to establish a systematic way to review student information for all students to surface trends and gaps in learning. The inconsistency between standardized and alternate assessment teams, in the use of protocols for a deep analysis of student information, limits opportunities to build teacher capacity and strengthen teacher practice to improve outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities as evidenced in the disparity across teams is analyzing student work and data.
- Extend present structures for collecting and monitoring data to enable administration and staff to adjust learning goals in a timely manner optimizing student achievement outcomes. (5.1)
 - Teachers and administration have a process in place to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular, instructional and assessment practices. This is done through the use of the *Benchmark Folder System* which provides monthly progress monitoring of student growth towards mastery of CCLS aligned IEP goals and objectives and the IRS which provides interim reporting on academic and social / emotional progress. The staff regularly shares student progress information with families through the use of the IRS form as well as communication journals and monthly newsletters. Administration has a system to regularly evaluate the use of resources and teacher team work through the identification of instructional lead teachers who, along with the school coach and assistant principals attend and/or facilitate at teacher team meetings and the Rtl forums. Information is shared with administration at weekly instructional cabinet meetings. The focus on professional development in foundational reading skills has been an outgrowth of these meetings. There is a well- tiered, collaborative evaluation and feedback process in place to make adjustments to instruction for students in standardized instruction. However, parallel structures around performance data are not at the

same depth for students in alternate assessment. For example SANDI and PECS's data, as it relates to the development of communication and literacy skills are not routinely analyzed. Consequently, the lack of a systematic system limits opportunities for all teachers to target' curricular development that impacts students' mastery of IEP goals connected to the CCLS.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P186X Walter J. Damrosch School					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	