

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 195

Elementary School 195

1250 Ward Avenue

Bronx

NY 10472

Principal: Andrew Kavanagh

Dates of review: March 14 - 15, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 195 is an elementary school with 802 students from grade 2 through grade 5. The school population comprises 21% Black, 74% Hispanic, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's key decisions around the use of human resources, technology, and the use of teacher meeting time, are beginning to support the attainment of the school's instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The principal hired two instructional coaches and a data specialist this year to support the professional development of teachers in increasing their understanding of the expectations outlined by the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The coaches target support for teachers based on identified needs and feedback from assistant principals about their use of questioning and facilitation techniques and aligned to the school wide goals of improving reading and math achievement. A newly acquired reading program, which consists of unit assessments and supplementary resources for teachers, is also aligned to expectations of improved reading performance. Professional development sessions offered helps staff familiarize themselves with the program to ensure that its implementation is meeting students' needs. Additionally, budgetary resources have been prioritized to increase the use of technology by purchasing Ipads and Smart Boards for grades 2 through 5. The creation of weekly collaborative planning periods for teachers at each grade level and a vertical curriculum team allows for focusing on aligning academic tasks and units of study to the CCLS, and teachers use weekly meetings to review and analyze student work and identify strategies for meeting student needs. These structures are beginning to increase organizational and instructional coherence across the school as students are exposed to increasingly rigorous tasks.
- Across grades, teachers engage in structured weekly collaborations to review student work and discuss possible adjustments to instruction or curriculum to meet the needs of their students. (4.2)
 - Weekly collaborative planning meetings focus primarily on discussions around pacing of lessons and identifying modifications to lessons for particular groups of students. A fourth grade team discussed the recently developed review packet for math, which was to be distributed to all students in preparation for upcoming standardized assessments. Teachers briefly reviewed the packet and then discussed the ways in which they adjusted the activities for students with disabilities and English language learners. Teachers state they value this time to share pedagogical improvements and the types of support their students will need in light of the demands of the CCLS. Some teams are also focusing their meetings on the analysis of student work products and results from unit and benchmark assessments including Acuity. Thus, teachers are beginning to share information about trends in student performance and make decisions about necessary instructional adjustments that will move students towards content and grade level goals.

- Teachers use a variety of rubrics and assessments including end-of-unit tasks to determine student progress towards goals and provide feedback to students about their work. (2.2)
 - Data binders maintained by teachers contain information as reflected on Reading Tracker, Acuity, ARIS, and classroom unit assessments, relative to student progress and performance in reading and math. Some data is disaggregated by the data specialist who then provides professional development and support for individual and groups of teachers in its use to determine implications for instruction. There is evidence in classroom charts, data binders, and lesson plans, that teachers also use the assessment results to group students for instruction and to identify additional supports for the extended day program. A review of student writing reveals the use of four-point standards based rubric and reflects general feedback and next steps for students. As a result, teachers are becoming more adept at making decisions about flexible grouping, individual support, and revisions to lessons and tasks that meet diverse students' learning needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that academic tasks and assessments align to the school's curricula and the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards so that across content areas diverse learners are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - The recently formed curriculum team, which comprises representatives from each grade level, has developed a curriculum map aligned to the CCLS for each grade and every subject area, which, reflects essential questions and follows a thematic approach to the delivery of content. A supplemental "Smart Start" curriculum provides intensive review at the beginning of the year that teachers use to review the prior grade level's major work with students. Pacing for the units allows teachers to make adjustments as needed based on students' needs. Teachers are aware of the instructional shifts and plan accordingly to include higher order questions, academic vocabulary, and opportunities for student discussion. In some classrooms, lesson plans reflect focused teaching points and alignment to standards, but details regarding the structure and pacing of the new curriculum is not widely shared or understood. Although there are templates provided for teacher use to identify specific adjustments for English language learners and special education students, there is limited use of these or any other structures to support diverse learners, with the exception of the English as a second language teacher and the special education teacher within their self-contained classrooms. The curriculum does not yet include specific descriptions of rigorous tasks that will assess student outcomes or benchmarks to mark student progress towards end of unit goals. Thus, opportunities for rigorous learning that enables students to consistently meet the demands of the CCLS are limited across the curriculum and most lessons do not cognitively engage diverse learners.
- Increase consistency of teacher practices across grades and content areas so that questioning and instructional routines result in higher order levels of participation and student work. (1.2)

- The principal and teachers state that students learn best when lessons are engaging, relevant, and interesting. This is combined with the principal's expectation that lessons will include a focus on questioning and discussion techniques and improved vocabulary across grades. Some teachers' lessons reflect thoughtful planning of tasks and activities and strategies for how they will group students for instruction based on needs. Although there is evidence that some teachers are attempting to include more questions and opportunities for student participation in lessons, the level of discussion is uneven and does not always lead to critical thinking. Most lessons do not include evidence of questions that will lead to student discussion. Additionally, pacing and structure do not promote students' deep understanding of new concepts. In one class the teacher asked several higher order questions but with limited wait time for responses, answered most of the questions and defined most of the new words in a portion of text she read aloud to the class. Additionally, in another classroom, students were introduced to a new topic, 'What is a pronoun?', but were not provided time to share their understanding and when sent to centers for group work, tasks were unrelated to the initial topic. The inconsistency and ineffectiveness of strategic pedagogical practices hamper the acceleration for many students across the school.
- Enhance school wide structures for the consistent implementation of initiatives that strengthen teacher capacity to meet students' social/emotional needs and foster effective personal and academic behaviors. (1.4)
 - The principal has recently designated the acronym SOAR (Safety, Ownership, Attitude, and Respect) as a way of establishing school wide expectations for student behavior. Teachers say the program was introduced as a way of promoting the development of positive interactions amongst students and staff. However, some students are unaware of the meaning of the acronym and while others know the words but are unable to connect the expectations to their own behavior or sense of responsibility. Teachers state they are at different stages of using the initiative and vary in their approach, including the use of SOAR "bucks" as rewards for students' positive behaviors throughout the day. These "bucks" are to be used in the school store, which is set to open later this spring. Although the program has some elements of PBIS (Positive behavior intervention system) there is no specific professional development designed to support teachers in identifying and responding to student behaviors in a systematic way. Students state they have uneven experiences within classrooms as some teachers are very clear about expectations while others do not use the SOAR initiative other than to participate in the school pledge, which is read each morning over the public announcement system. This uneven execution of otherwise good attempts at building a positive school culture limits teachers' ability to meet students' developmental needs and their academic progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

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|---|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| School name: X195 | 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 |