

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Paul Laurence Dunbar, X301

08X301

**890 Cauldwell Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Benjamin Basile

Dates of review: October 23 - 24, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Paul L. Dunbar School is a middle school with 325 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 33% Black, 65% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 88%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is working diligently toward utilizing a research based rubric with an emphasis on improving teacher planning and instruction and aligning professional development to support pedagogical growth. (4.1)
 - Teachers are supported through self assessment of practice, walkthroughs, and informal observations. In turn, teacher efficacy is determined by focusing on lesson planning, environment and instruction. The aforementioned domains drive a collaboratively prepared professional development plan to improve practice. Oral and documented feedback informs teachers about the quality of their practice. Anticipated tiered supports are beginning to address the specific needs of teachers. To date the administration has completed one informal observation for each teacher. Feedback to teachers is emerging to support teacher development as evidenced by improved lesson plans. As a result, teachers are developing tasks that are beginning to meet the academic needs of students as evidenced by student work products.
- The administration makes effective organizational decisions that align with the school's instructional goals which support efforts towards improved student performance. (1.3)
 - This year despite budgetary issues the principal thoughtfully implemented Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes in grades 6 and 7 to best address the learning needs of identified groups of students. Extended English Language Arts (ELA) and math classes provide remediation to improve student's basic skills. Each afternoon teacher teams meet to support instructional goals, analyze current data, improve lesson planning while prioritizing the rollout of the Common Core Learning Standards resulting in activities designed to maximize student learning. As an iZone participating school, 25 laptops are utilized to access a free online learning platform. Comprehensive afterschool programs are rich and diverse which extend students' learning opportunities. Consequently, these ongoing opportunities for focused instruction to meet the needs of all students result in improved student work products and activities.
 - The school is located in the lowest socioeconomic Congressional District in the USA. A significant number of students reside in homeless shelters. To strategically ensure the physical well being of students the principal programs lunch at the end of the day to ensure that students do not go home hungry because they may not have the opportunity to eat during after school hours. Students have the opportunity to request healthy snacks throughout the school day. This unique scheduling strategy enables teacher teams to meet while students each lunch to strategically address all instructional phases, including content and grade collaborations as well as the rollout of content area tasks. The most relevant data from the school's designed assessments, as well as student work is shared and analyzed, resulting in the formation of next steps. Once challenging benchmarks are attained, new ones are identified in order to reach the long term objective of attempting to have all students

perform at grade level and be socially, emotionally and academically prepared for high school and ultimately college.

- All constituents concur that the school is a safe, nurturing environment where students receive a good level of support resulting in the personal and academic development of all students. (1.4)
 - “Caring”, “considerate”, and “warm”, is how one parent described the principal. Parents state that they are appreciative of the extra help and hands-on assistance that teachers provide to the students. Students are thankful for the support provided to resolve conflicts that interfere with their academic and social growth. There are advisories and a Positive Behavior Intervention System to support the whole child. The principal has an open door policy to promote student learning and parental involvement. As a result, fewer students are suspended at school as evidenced by online occurrence reports.
 - The principal has systemically incorporated city and community based organizations, including the Mayor’s Absentee Initiative and the Bronx System of Care to infuse additional guidance supports for students and strategies for teachers and parents in addressing the social and emotional issues of students. The student government has an active voice in the school. They requested and then organized a talent show and a Halloween dance. A student-led bake sale will help offset the cost of field trips. A direct result of these programs is a 28% reduction in chronic absenteeism. The care management model specifically provides much needed mentoring for the student who is transitioning back to school after being incarcerated. These initiatives plus the caring and kindness exhibited by the administration, faculty, and staff daily have resulted in improved overall Safety and Respect scores on the most recent Learning Environment Survey.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen rigor of instructional practices across subject areas to ensure that learning experiences engage students in higher order learning skills. (1.1)
 - There are inconsistencies in the delivery of rigorous instructional tasks across classrooms even though the curricula reflect thoughtful planning. In one class a teacher-directed activity required students to copy information onto a worksheet while in another class a civic engagement activity required students to write to elected officials regarding the Bill of Rights. This activity resulted in the class receiving proclamations from elected officials because of their efforts in comparing this document to their lives and community. Attention to student notebooks varied and the work represented lacked continuity across classrooms and grades. Most classroom activities did not require students to use higher order thinking or problem solving skills. Teacher questioning techniques required minimal student reflection and in some instances teachers answered their own questions. Although writing is prioritized there are inconsistencies in the rigor of the tasks and the resulting student writing throughout the school. In turn, not all students engage in higher order thinking, especially English language learners and special education students.

Hence, the school's current State Accountability Status is "Priority" and in the most recent Progress Report (PR) 20.4% of students in ELA and 30.8% in math are performing at levels 3 or 4.

- Promote greater consistency in scaffolding instruction in order for lessons to reflect purposeful grouping with appropriately challenging tasks to maximize student learning. (1.2)
 - Although teachers can state the general needs of students they do not consistently use this information to effectively implement instructional techniques to engage all students during lessons, i.e., timely, targeted support to students in small groups as an embedded practice. Teacher questioning techniques required minimal student reflection and in some instances teachers answered their own questions. In an ICT class there was no differentiation of instruction and some students were disengaged as evidenced by them just sitting quietly and not completing assigned tasks. Although an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher provides skill-based lessons only 40% of the schools ELL population are attaining 75% growth percentile in ELA and math as measured by the 2011-2012 PR. Consequently, most teachers deliver generic lessons, and students demonstrate varying degrees of participation in classes observed. Furthermore, student work folders revealed uneven levels of complexity of assignments and some folders contained minimal or no work. Hence, the majority of students are not performing at grade level proficiency in ELA and math.
- Enhance the analysis and application of baseline data in core content areas to enable all teachers to identify individual students' needs and strengths in order to provide targeted instruction. (2.2)
 - An analysis of baseline data leads to the identification of content area strands that have been mastered and those which have not been attained. However, there are no identifiable next steps to address the varying academic needs of students. Furthermore, teachers do not consistently utilize baseline data to evaluate the impact of instructional resources and teaching practices on student outcomes. There were no verbal or written (exit slips) teacher checks for understanding in lessons observed. Student self assessment is inconsistent across classrooms. There was minimal evidence that formative classroom data is used to support timely instructional modifications. Consequently, students are not performing to their maximum level as evidenced in student work products and standard test scores. Therefore, the percent of students passing core courses (72% ELA and 81% Math) is inconsistent in comparison to students attaining proficiency on State exams (20% ELA and 30% Math) as evidenced by 2011-2012 Progress Report data. (b)

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Paul L. Dunbar	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