

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Leadership and Community Service

**Middle School 303X
1700 Macombs Road
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Patricia Bentley

Dates of review: February 12 - 13, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Leadership and Community Service is a middle school with 340 students from six through grade 8th. The school population comprises 24% Black, 75% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 58% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has cultivated a highly supportive and inclusive culture that enhances the academic and personal development of staff and students. (1.4)
 - The school has developed a safe and positive learning environment which promotes student growth. The principal has fostered a supportive culture through retreats and team-building structures that result in teacher collaboration and empowerment, which impact positively on student learning. Teachers use positive framing and remain emotionally constant in difficult situations, such as using routines and rituals that build on students' strengths regarding academic and social emotional learning. Select students review their peer's writing responses using rubrics and checklists. This information is used to identify students who are highlighted for their progress by administration and receive recognition for their work. This builds students' confidence and encourages peer reviews during writing lessons. Students feel respected and valued by all staff members who enable them to take risks and have a voice, especially through the peer review process, in their learning. Hence, this creates a safe and richer learning environment where student writing is flourishing across the grades, based on the amount of writing evident in the notebooks and folders.
 - The school has a well-organized system to support students with academic and social-emotional learning. Advisory teams, and interns that provide counseling, meet regularly to review student progress toward goals. Every student is matched with an advisor who coordinates support for students by providing weekly guidance on academic progress in order to keep students on track with their goals. In addition, they provide regular feedback to parents and follow up with administration regarding progress. Students as well as parents appreciate the written student progress updates that are provided each quarter, especially because they have an opportunity to write questions or comments on the form making it a more personal and interactive process for all. Information includes academic progress and student attendance. This helps to build better communication and strengthens the relationships with families in the school. This is evident in the school's most recent Progress Report in which the 'Learning Environment' received a grade of "A" and the "safety and respect" category received the highest score of 8.5 points.
- The principal effectively uses resources that align to the school's goals, resulting in meaningful student work products. (1.3)
 - The school effectively utilizes personnel to support its instructional goals. For example, consultants and staff members assist in building teacher capacity in English language arts and mathematics during planning meetings and professional development opportunities that support the school's writing goal. Furthermore, consultants and coaches provide support to teachers regarding data analysis that is used to plan lessons, tasks and curricular units aligned to the Common Core Learning

Standards (CCLS). Additionally, technology is a focus of professional development as a tool to engage students during lessons. As a result, student writing across all content areas has improved and there is better coherence of curriculum and teaching practices across the school which enhances the quality of all student work.

- The school has created structures in the schedule that provide weekly blocks of time for teachers to plan, analyze data, review student work and sometimes teach with their colleagues. For example, during math lessons, there could be two teachers working collaboratively with students. Therefore, students benefit from smaller group instruction that targets their skills effectively. Teacher teams develop and utilize a “scholar’s challenge” to extend student learning and deepen critical thinking skills through these rigorous tasks. As a result, teaching practices continue to improve student learning experiences and outcomes evident in the formative and summative assessments reviewed.
- Teacher teams collaboratively align assessments to the curricula and monitor student progress in order to make adjustments that support student learning. (2.2)
 - During weekly meetings, teachers analyze a range of student data including Fountas and Pinnell reading levels, NYS assessments and student work. A review of the data revealed the need to focus on writing across content areas which became a school-wide focus. Much attention has been given to student writing across the grades through the work of the inquiry team meetings. The school uses a student work protocol tracking sheet to track student progress and make instructional adjustments in curriculum and teaching practices. In English language arts, teachers follow a process that enables them to Analyze Complex Text (ACT) over a four day period with a focus on critical thinking skills. Curriculum units have been aligned to reflect this process and tracking sheet results which is supported by the consultant through extensive coaching. Teachers find this process clear and helpful during planning. As a result, student work focuses on clarity, reasoning and evidence to support student responses. In addition to writing goals, during advisory groups, teachers monitor student goals, provide students with actionable feedback, and engage students in reflection about their progress. Advisors confer with individual students or groups of students using a tracking sheet that is shared with families and reviewed by administration. Consequently, these practices lead to curriculum and instructional adjustments, provide actionable feedback to teachers and students, and enhance a positive culture for student learning across content areas.
- The leadership supports teacher development through regular cycles of classroom observations that build a common language and promote reflection on teacher growth. (4.1)
 - Teachers receive clear feedback regarding guidance on teaching practices that foster questioning techniques and management systems that support student thinking evident in student work products across classrooms. Both oral and written, this feedback is based on a research-based framework that is used by all administrators, coaches, counselors and consultants. Furthermore, mentors and consultants provide targeted

support for teachers based on needs assessments and surveys that are reviewed regularly and adjusted with staff collaboratively. The principal has an open door policy for all staff. New and experienced teachers find the feedback from administration and support staff useful. New teachers receive targeted training, such as, Lemov's Teach Like a Champion Techniques (TLAC). Additionally, the school has created a video library to support teachers with strategies that cultivate a positive learning environment in the school. "My teaching practices are more explicit and clear for students", is the sentiment of one teacher that is shared by many staff members. As a result, teacher goals are well-aligned to school priorities, which, consequently, build a common language and promote engaging discourse among staff during retreats and weekly planning sessions that extend after school. Hence, these structures to support teacher development have resulted in improved teacher practice and reflection.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the quality of academic tasks to effectively challenge all students and close the achievement gap. (1.1)
 - The school has galvanized all of their resources to develop a curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. To that end, teachers, consultants, support staff and administration have worked tirelessly since the summer and now after school on Fridays to include critical thinking skills through a Universal Design for Learning approach in curriculum maps, units and lessons. Writing is at the center of the focus in instructional tasks in all content areas. Lesson plans in all content areas include detailed information on standards and skills that aim to emphasize rigorous skills in writing. Although the English language arts curriculum includes the skills that support critical thinking through the ACT process, they are not yet embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. Teachers have emphasized key standards and shifts, but have not yet unpacked the curriculum strategically and sometimes use the same lessons and resources across grade levels. This limits the opportunity for students to demonstrate their thinking, access and transfer new knowledge and skills across the grades and subjects. The school is very reflective and recognizes this as a next step in their curriculum work and has made adjustments to refine some of their units. Nevertheless, student progress and performance data has not yet successfully closed the achievement gap, based on the school's recent Progress Report which the school received a "C" grade.
- Improve upon the use of data to further develop teaching practices that promote academic rigor and improve student outcomes for all learners. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, teachers use a workshop model that includes a mini lesson with opportunities for students to practice skills learned in small groups and independently. This framework is based on a belief that all students can learn and is supported by TLAC techniques that build a collaborative and respectful culture and learning environment. Teaching practices this year are informed by a research-based framework and

focus on critical thinking skills that are planned during grade and content meetings, leading to students participating in contests, such as, the Regional NYS Science Olympiad competitions. Although English Language Learners and students with disabilities are making progress this school year, based on the formative assessments, the school has yet to close the achievement gap effectively for these student groups. During class visits, all students are not cognitively engaged, as some have to wait for their peers before they can move on to the next level of academic rigor in a whole class approach. Therefore, their progress is not maximized during classroom instruction and thinking skills are not appropriately challenged across classrooms as they are in mathematics through 'Scholar's Challenge, which is an opportunity for teachers to engage students in critical thinking skills through problem solving tasks that are developed collaboratively during grade meetings. Hence, math progress and performance levels are accelerating at a higher rate than literacy and evident in student work samples. While there is more writing than prior years, all students are not appropriately challenged in a consistent manner.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Leadership and Community Service	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