Quality Review Report

2012-2013

I.S. 313 School of Leadership Development

Intermediate School X313

1600 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Lauren Wilkins

Dates of review: April 30, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Veronica Yurcik

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

I.S. 313 School of Leadership Development is an intermediate school with 436 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 28% Black, 70% Hispanic, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 34% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 88.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has begun to integrate curriculum and academic tasks that are more closely aligned to Common Core Learning Standards to better prepare students to meet new performance standards. (1.1)

    - The school adopted a new math curriculum mid-year to reflect the shifting grade priorities and individual grade foci of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The school's math coach works with grade teams to develop their understanding of these curriculum changes using the new pacing calendars that he created. Under the direction of an assistant principal in charge of English, the school has assembled a conglomerate of curriculum resources this year to support literacy instruction reflective of CCLS. Using a purchased curriculum, curriculum calendars created by the assistant principal, resources from Engage NY and the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) Common Core library, as well as staff-created units, the school has focused on reading, writing and textual evidence. As a result, students describe their work as being more challenging this year, having been exposed to more demanding text and activities that require them to infer and make claims based on textual evidence. In math classes, teachers are beginning to ask students explain their thinking both orally and in writing supporting the CCLS math practice of making sense of problems by encouraging students to reflect on meaning and solution pathways. Topics such as, "What makes a Hero" in English language arts using both fiction and non-fiction resources, and attempts to integrate world real problems into math reflect planning to engage a variety of learners.

- The school promotes pedagogy that scaffolds learning to make academic tasks accessible to all students to increase student thinking and engagement. (1.2)

    - The principal expects implementation of the workshop model in lessons with explicit modeling, scaffolded learning, and opportunity for student interaction. Students are attentive and respectful in classrooms as they engage with teachers to tackle assigned tasks. In some classes, strong evidence of routines, strategic questioning and use of scaffolds support a diversity of learners' engagement, participation and effort in creating meaningful work products. In a 7th grade English language arts class, the teacher announced her expectations for performance persistently, monitoring student focus and audibility of verbal responses, and questioned students continually to assess their understanding of vocabulary and task. Students moved seamlessly into collaborative groups, conversing with peers over text details to ascertain the author's point of view. In a grade 7 and 8 self-contained special education math class, students demonstrated stamina and focus working both independently and with peers to use scientific notation to express different quantities and to identify patterns. Some students made use of a reference chart, others moved index cards with decimals and numerals to determine place value. Using a document camera enabled students to view each other's work and to share thinking. In addition, students shared what they found tricky in their work with the teacher and fellow

students, collaboratively taking a second look at specific identified problems. Scores for student response to the School Survey item, “My teachers inspire me to learn”, placed the school in the 80th and 88th percentile respectively for peer and citywide groups. Recognizing effective practices in these classrooms, the school arranged for one of these teachers to present a workshop and scheduled an intervisitation to the other class in order to provide professional learning to promote more consistent pedagogical practice and raise levels of student engagement across the school.

- The school values data collection and is initiating protocols for analysis that provide a window into student achievement and academic needs. (2.2)
    - The school administers baseline, mid-year, and end of year assessments as well as end of unit assessments in literacy and math to evaluate student achievement and inform instruction across grades. Teachers are instructed to complete end of unit assessment report forms, listing in priority order the performance indicators that students most need to improve. In addition, the math coach collates weekly quiz and end of unit assessment information, creating detailed spreadsheets and graphs. Teachers are developing skills in analyzing data with primary emphasis on end results. Thus, teachers use assessment data to make decisions on skills that need to be re-taught and mastered for achievement of performance standards.
    - Teachers report a variety of ways by which they check for understanding including circulating, observing and listening in, and examining student work products and notebooks. Teachers use published rubrics and develop their own with varying frequency and level of skill in implementation. Some students state that the use of rubrics has helped them to both plan and evaluate their work. Thus, the school’s efforts to improve assessment practices is beginning to yield benefits in teacher and student evaluation of learning in order to determine needed pedagogical adjustments to further learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Implement observations using a common teaching framework to establish clear expectations and understanding of critical next steps to elevate pedagogy. (4.1)
    - While the principal states that there are many conversations between supervisors and teachers about practice, consistent implementation of written formal and informal observations, and collaboration about student work products is not evident. The principal was unable to produce any unsatisfactory (U) rated observations for teachers that she cited as possible U ratings for this year. While some feedback in formal observations was explicit, feedback tended to be generalized. For instance, formal observations contained commendation statements such as “you followed the workshop model”, you attempted to “differentiate”, or “your students feel safe in expressing themselves”, and recommendations such as, “lessons should address different learning styles” and “student participation is wonderful but students should be reminded to raise hands.” The school did not implement the 2012-2013 Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) for teacher development including the

selection of competencies relevant to teachers development needs. Teachers state that the Danielson Framework for Teaching "was spoken about" at a faculty meeting. However, they note that they did not receive further professional development and are unaware of the selection of any particular competencies as areas of focus. Records indicate that teachers received one to two informal write-ups this school year, of which one of them, in several cases, was a check-list form. Consequently, teachers are not receiving regular feedback, and feedback, when provided, is not consistently specific enough to help teachers understand next steps effectively to improve teaching and learning.

  - The school has no professional development plan or a system to organize supervisory observation data to inform teacher development. The principal states that she talks informally with supervisors to share which teachers they visited and what they observed. Thus there is no clearly documented record of observations conducted or record of strategic actions to guide teacher support and improvement. The responsibility for professional learning is charged to assistant principals and coaches who work with teachers during common planning meetings that are irregularly attended due to scheduling conflicts and coverage duties that preclude teachers' consistent participation. Although teachers state that administration informs them of out-of-school professional development opportunities, they indicate that they have not had formal support for implementing CCLS other than the fall professional development day. The lack of a coherent system for analyzing teacher observation data prevents the school from making informed assignment, tenure and retention decisions. Furthermore, the lack of a defined professional development plan hinders the school efforts to improve pedagogy and raise student performance.

- Establish an explicit set of goals that is understood by all constituencies to drive efforts for school improvement. (3.1)

  - The school is unable to explain, with any specificity, data from key documents such as its Progress Report and School Survey. Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals, while reflecting back to recommendations made in the school's last Quality Review, lack explicitness and defined action plans and interim benchmarks. Goals are broadly stated such as "100% of teachers will use available data to set academic goals…", and "80% of teachers will participate in three professional development sessions." A CEP goal to reduce incidents or suspensions by 1% was not sufficient in terms of potential impact. Based on data provided by the principal, a 1% decrease in incidents would amount to a difference of less than one incident. Instructional goals listed in the CEP, the quality review self-evaluation and a school list of goals created to align district goals do not closely match thereby diffusing focused attention. Where the school has attempted to set benchmark checks in math for quiz and unit assessments, those benchmarks are cited in terms of percentage pass rates and remain unchanged for the year, with expected pass rates of 70% for quizzes and 60% for end of unit assessments. Consequently, lack of comprehensive analysis and understanding of key school needs inhibits the ability to define outcome based goals and viable action plans to tackle root causes that impede students from accelerating their learning and achieving performance standards.

- Establish systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of school decision-making to ensure coherence of practices and policies that support implementation of rigorous curriculum and students' academic mastery. (5.1)

    - Although the school has made progress this year in adjusting curriculum and assessment practices to align more closely with CCLS, there are no regular processes to evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices. Consequently, there is a lack of awareness in and focused attention to developing deeper understanding and recognition of needed interventions. For example, lessons plans focusing on book content or unit activities matched to an array of standards still predominate over purposeful choice of activities to support learning of selected standards. Emphasis is placed on stand-alone skills of the week. To address the needs of the school's large population of English language learners and develop their vocabulary, the school instituted the use of a software program to teach English. Teachers state that students like the program but there had not been training for teachers in how to interpret the reports on students' progress. In addition, administration has not ascertained any ways to monitor the effectiveness of the software program or to measure student success, relying on end-of-year summative assessments alone to determine success of implementation. While it is commendable that the school tries to engage students in reflective evaluation through use of student "snapback feedback sheets" after completion of units, both students and teachers doubt their value as questions are repetitive and not meaningful enough to provide helpful data. Thus, the lack of processes to monitor and evaluate initiatives inhibits the school from accessing useful data to improve learning and support CCLS.

    - Reviewer observation of school environment and feedback received from students and parents do not match low scores on the annual School Survey, especially in the areas of safety and discipline. In fact, the principal notes that suspensions have decreased significantly within her tenure and were down by 50% from the previous year to about fifteen in the current year. Nonetheless, the school has not investigated causal factors for recurring low survey scores or the disconnects between environmental observation and data so as to prompt potential organizational changes. Furthermore, despite administrations' obvious deep concern and well intentioned effort, there is a lack of clarity regarding implementation of student support. The principal remains at the forefront of outreach to parents. While parents express appreciation for her immediacy in handling discipline, safety, mental health and social-emotional needs of students and families, the school is not sufficiently organized to ensure that responsibility for student welfare is shared by a diversity of adults. Although teachers are encouraged by the principal to "adopt a child" and check-in with them frequently, student selection is random and there is no record of participation or intervention. While intent is positive, there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation systems. Defined expectations relating to academics, college and career readiness, school culture and accountability are not made clear to constituencies, thereby diminishing coherent effort for school improvement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: I.S.313 School of Leadership Development	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score	X			

Instructional Core				
To what extent does the school regularly…	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				
To what extent does the school …	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				
To what extent does the school …	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