

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Museum School

Early Childhood School X333

888 Rev. James A. Polite Avenue

Bronx

NY 10489

Principal: Arthur Brown

Dates of review: January 10-11, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Evelyn W. Castro

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Museum School is an elementary school with 465 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 22% Black, 76% Hispanic 1% Asian Students, and 1% from other ethnic groups. The student body includes 27% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and staff have created rigorous, coherent curricula that are aligned to state standards and engage all learners. (1.1)
 - The school leaders and teachers used last year's assessments for grades 4 and 5 to plan English language arts curricula with an aim to improve student performance in the coming year. The curriculum includes Common Core Learning Standard (CCLS) units of study and curriculum maps that are aligned to key standards. School team notes, professional development plans and ongoing assessments evidenced this planning. Students engage in activities that connect to specific areas of focus described in curriculum maps such as: understanding scientific practices, invigorating partnering reading, and tapping into skills in cross genre book clubs. Curricular expectations for each student are appropriately challenging, including goals for students with disabilities and English language learners. For example, the third and fourth grade anchor standard is to describe in detail characters in a story. Students describe their traits, motivations and feelings and explain how their actions contribute to a sequence of events. A second standard is to describe, in depth, a character, setting, event, story or drama drawing specific details from the text. Additionally, teachers school-wide require that students develop evidence-based conclusions during whole group discussions and independent writing assignments. Assignments across grades begin with fluency and accuracy and move to expanding vocabulary and increasing academic language in writing. As a result of these efforts, student achievement is improving, as seen in recent student assessments of independent reading comprehension assignments in grades 4 and 5 that reveal an improvement in learning outcomes.
 - Aligning with the school goals for students, professional development for teachers focuses on creating engaging lessons. During team meetings, grade 2 and 3 teachers were planning nonfiction lessons, science units and math projects. Teachers plan units with Teachers College facilitators who use Depth of Knowledge (DOK) stem questions, which are designed to reinforce thinking and help students improve writing skills. This instructional practice show teachers' efforts to help students answer questions using evidence, close the achievement gap and prepare children for higher academic levels. This focused instructional planning to engage students and raise achievement levels is indicated on the school's 12-month professional development plan. During classroom visits many students, including grades 2 and 3 students, were seen analyzing text and connecting their reading to real life experiences, resulting in all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, demonstrating high-levels thinking.
- Teachers collaborate to align curricula and assessments, and make instructional decisions to meet the needs of all students including relevant subgroups. (2.2)

- Teachers work in grade level teams to develop scoring rubrics that give actionable feedback to students. Working with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, teachers have also developed performance tasks to improve student outcomes in writing fluency. The key goals include improvement in student mastery of the CCLS in writing in grades 3-5. Additionally, school leaders use planning and observations of lessons to give feedback to teachers. Student folders, teacher binders, Fountas and Pinnell benchmarks evident in every classroom visitation revealed evidence of student progress.
- School leaders and teachers saw the need to improve writing across grades. In grades 2 and 3 teachers created formative assessments that focus on developing stamina in writing and how to use writing conventions. All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, experience engaging curriculum in writing. Elements of Response to Intervention and i-Ready system, an online system of instruction and assessment, are also utilized to improve student outcomes. Teacher-developed rubrics, conference logs and progress reports also help students and families become aware of their next learning steps. As a result of these efforts, ongoing assessments, conference notes, and on demand writing have shown improvement in writing. For example, in classrooms visited there was evidence of reading and writing logs, peer editing and exit tickets documenting improved incremental achievement and mastery of reading and writing skills by all student including English language learners and students with disabilities.
- School leaders use focused observations aligned to a research-based framework to provide feedback that captures teachers' strengths and challenges, and provides a clear picture of instructional next steps. (4.1)
 - School leaders' planning documents and professional development logs reveal an emphasis on classroom management for new teachers as well as a focus on probationary teachers and teachers approaching tenure. Observations by school leaders occur weekly on a published schedule. The Danielson feedback form is followed up by formal and informal observations, as well as a review of student work, and each formal observation includes pre- and post-discussion. The school also plans visits to high performing schools and intervisitations to glean from staff that has excellent student outcomes. These actions by school leaders have improved instructional practices as evidenced by review of a series of written teacher observations over time.
 - Teachers create goals for their professional growth that align with overall school goals. This includes assignments for mentors and grade leaders to support teacher development. Ongoing reflection and interim goal setting has led to improved teacher practice, as evidenced in the data reviewed. For example, one grade 3 teacher was coached over four weeks by the principal with a focus on engaging students through questioning. Observation reports reflect improvement in questioning techniques by this teacher. Additionally, classroom visitations of grade 3 reveal questioning that expands student thinking and improves student work. Clear expectations and effective feedback support teacher development that sustains professional growth.

- The school hires highly qualified teachers and assigns them strategically to support all students, resulting in improved student achievement. (1.3)
 - The principal and his team carefully plan the use of resources to improve curricular access for all students and to achieve school goals that include vocabulary development and improved written expression. Specifically, the school's instructional goals detail how this literacy work can be consistently integrated with the arts. For example, the principal allocates resources to take students on content-related field trips in order to enhance and reinforce curricular concepts and vocabulary development. The space in the school is designed to allow art studios to extend across the entire lower level where extensive displays of student artwork using a variety of media serve to express the curriculum at that grade level. For example, grade 4 students working on the American Revolution created murals depicting that time period. Additionally, Museum Night, a school event where classes and grades display their work in the arts, literacy and writing for parents and community members, highlights school partnerships and includes staff and coaches. This collaboration results in the production of meaningful work products and progress toward school goals, including improvement in students' mastery of the CCLS in writing and literacy. The school also purchased laptops and SMARTboards to integrate technology into instruction. Teachers create computer based instructional plans for students across grades. English as a second language classrooms visited showed improvement in the growth of English language acquisition. As a result of the use of technology, art and field trips integrated into instruction, English language learners have moved from the beginner level to intermediate and advanced levels.
 - After review of student data, the cabinet determined a need for additional support for students with disabilities and English language learners, and hired new teachers including special educators and teachers of English as a second language in order to meet student needs. In addition, both new teachers as well as established staff use i-Ready material for students with disabilities and integrated technology across grades and subjects to improve student performance and engagement, specifically among these relevant subgroups. Looping is practiced in grades 2 and 3, allowing students to stay with one teacher over a two-year period. Less time is spent on review and getting to understand each student's learning style because of the two-year relationship between students and teachers in one classroom. According to teachers and parents interviewed, this strategic practice of having children remain with a teacher for more than one year maximizes teacher time on instructional goals and enhances teachers' in-depth knowledge and understanding of each child. Additionally, teachers report having a better understanding of student interests and being better equipped to create more engaging and challenging tasks due to deep knowledge of their students' strengths and needs. Also, team planning is designed to include the voices of general education teachers, as well as, special education and second language acquisition teachers. These initiatives and collaborations lead to diverse perspectives on how to achieve school goals, work with student groups and improve outcomes for students as evidenced in incremental improvement for all students, including students with disabilities, in English language arts interim assessments and Acuity data for grades 2 and 3.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop engaging tasks for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners that allow children to generate higher order thinking and improve student achievement. (1.2)
 - The school uses its own resources and partnerships to develop effective after school programming that is well aligned to the school's goals. This programming is reflective of the teachers' shared belief that extended time to explore engaging academic learning experiences leads to greater opportunities for academic mastery. Also, the teaching rubric used by the school encourages after school instruction and teacher practices to embed questioning and discussion in all group work in order to realize the school's instructional goals. However, the school-wide discussion for how to extend learning time for all students has not yet occurred. This limited discussion leads to fewer opportunities for after school learning for all grades, thus some students are excluded from opportunities to receive additional academic support.
 - During classroom visits, a majority of the teachers used questioning techniques that scaffold prior knowledge and offer multiple entry points to the curriculum for all students including students with disabilities and English language learners. However, not all teachers across grades and subjects strategically provided scaffolding techniques, qualitative support, and expanded activities, thus limiting students' ability to build deeper reasoning and exhibit thinking at high levels.
- Deepen the involvement of the entire school community in understanding the school's goals and participating in the decision-making involved in school improvement. (3.1)
 - The school staff and parents are familiar with the School Comprehensive Education Plan. There are regular meetings with the School Leadership Team and faculty meetings to review the short list of goals and action plans as evidenced by agendas and sign-in sheets. School leaders, parents and staff track the list of goals to drive efforts in student academic achievement as well as social emotional growth. However, interviews with the staff reveal that they have a limited understanding of the theory of action that causes change that will enhance student learning and social emotional growth, thus limiting the school/community's full sense of ownership and participation in the process of school improvement.
 - Interviews reveal staff and parents are aware of the school goals and process for improvement. There is also evidence of effective communication regarding school goals in multiple languages. Age appropriate students are involved in a council called Student Voice that has regular meetings as evidenced by agendas reviewed. As seen during observation of grade team meetings, members of the staff are involved in a comprehensive understanding of school initiatives and the process for school improvement. However, during interviews parents revealed that they have a limited role in decision-making and school

improvement planning, hindering the progress toward meeting school goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Museum Early Childhood 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