

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Elementary School 396

X396

**1930 Andrews Ave
Bronx, New York 10453**

Principal: Nicole Tine

Dates of review: March 19 – 20, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S 396 is an elementary school with 370 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 20% Black, 76% Hispanic, 3% White, 0% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. 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's curriculum is well aligned to key Common Core Learning Standards and promotes higher order thinking that supports student achievement. (1.1)
 - Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) are well embedded in the school's revised units of study. School leaders, teacher teams and consultants from Columbia University Teachers' College ensure the units target key standards and students are immersed in research based learning experiences that expect them to closely read and evaluate text, discuss and produce written work that argue positions using knowledge gained from texts, magazine articles, graphics and video clips. For example, in a fourth grade task, students written arguments centered on examining whether or not the Declaration of Independence is a fair document and provided evidence from a variety of sources to support their position. As a result, students engage in producing work products that promotes increasing student achievement resulting in 50% of students in grade four moving from a level 1 to a level 2 on post assessment tasks since the beginning of the school year, thus ensuring closing the achievement gap and promoting readiness for the expectations of middle school.
 - Teacher use of the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix and the Universal Design for Learning curriculum principles, an educational framework that provides guidance around the development of classroom environments that support individual learning differences to ensure student tasks are rigorous and support the needs of all learners. Unit topics of study are differentiated in terms of process or product thus ensuring multiple entry points for English language learners and special education students into class lessons. For example, choice of graphic organizers, checklists or cue cards which help student organize and choice of topics of study are provided to students and lower grade students are free to research and formulate written opinions about video games, toys, restaurants, favorite movies and books. Students present their written critiques to parents, staff and classmates thus ensuring all students engage in authentic learning experiences that extend higher order thinking.
- Across classrooms, teacher well-planned lessons broaden opportunities for student collaboration ensuring student engagement and ownership of their learning. (1.2)
 - Teacher practice is informed by a common framework and they operate on the belief system that instructional practices align to the specific learning style of the students and that all students must demonstrate positive emotional and social growth to be successful. At the core of much of their work is The Nest Program classroom methodology and guideposts in Positive Behavior Supports that steer students through managing specific behaviors such as anxiety and sensory functioning in order to meet the needs of diverse learners. Teachers instructional planning across classrooms ensures students are grouped strategically

and differentiated entry points such as, visuals, videos, activities and student work products and processes are adjusted to provide students with multiple entry points. Teacher and student use of sensory diets, a menu of activities for Autism Spectrum Disorder students to monitor and regulate their behavior, supports students in focusing on their academic work. Teachers purposefully expand the use of these practices so all students may benefit. The school's commitment to Columbia University Teachers' College Reading and Writing workshop model ensures high levels of student participation as they embed daily accountable talk opportunities within lessons. Turn and talks, collaborative group work on projects and math problem solving experiences support student engagement in their own learning. Teacher invention of cartoon like characters to elevate student interest levels in lessons support high levels of student engagement. For example, in one classroom, teacher use of the cartoon character Adomo supported students through finding the perimeter of a polygon on the on a SMART board and as students worked on solving a problem together, they referred to how the character had solved the problem and the instructional strategy used. This ensured students successfully completed their task. As a result of these practices, all students are challenged to produce quality work, engage in learning experiences and are supported in their unique style of learning where they vest in monitoring and improving their own performance.

- School leaders use a consistent system for observing teacher pedagogy that results in improved instructional practice. (4.1)
 - The school is part of the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot program and has intensely embedded Danielson's framework into all facets of professional learning and teacher reflection processes. Low inference data gathered by school leaders provides teachers with clear, effective and immediate feedback through one to one conversations, e-mails and teacher goal setting sessions. "Shout outs" via e-mails highlight teacher strengths. One teacher stated that she had been highlighted for supporting a group of students with the use of strategies and tools so that they assess the quality of their own work. As evidenced in ARIS data, teachers set individual goals around their specific needs. Cursory visits to classrooms by school leaders determine if teachers have strengthened their practice in a particular area or if teachers need additional support. Teacher team work aligns to the framework and they look closely at student work to determine the best instructional practices that will continue to raise the level of student performance. Teachers state that the principal's mantra, "If students are not learning the way we teach, then we must teach the way they learn" has shifted their thinking and ensured they are reflective. As a result, teachers are deeply self-reflective about their craft and the vast majority of teachers have moved up one level in the area of instruction on the framework.
 - School leaders' astute re-assignment of staff to key positions ensures higher levels of student performance. The principal's strategic decision to place additional teachers in regular classrooms to co-teach has significantly reduced the student to teacher ratio, thus ensuring all students are provided with small group instruction. As a result, students receive additional focused instructional time. Data from the analysis of student work and trends from the observation feedback cycle inform the school's professional development. Workshops on a variety of topics

including the strategic use of student tools and manipulatives supporting student math problem solving are provided. New teachers receive mentor support and engage in lab site visits, teacher conducted inter – visitations, and peer video reviews of teacher practice. These form part of the effective reflective rituals at the school. The school’s intentional and well-designed professional development plan has resulted in elevating teacher instructional practice resulting in a 21% increase in the number of students performing at or above level on baseline line to midyear math assessments.

- Teachers and teacher teams effectively use data from various sources to improve instructional practices that support student learning. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers consistently and methodically gather information about student progress. Teachers’ College assessments, math network unit assessments, performance assessments tasks and rubrics provide the basis for ensuring teachers gain a clear picture of student strength and support areas. Teacher teams meet weekly to examine student work. Information gained from their analysis informs student groups and partnerships, as well as determines student tasks or instructional processes that need adjustments across the grade to meet the specific needs of learners. For example, as a result of examining student work, teachers determined the need for additional support in providing evidence to defend written arguments, a key focus for the school. Thus teachers provided students with additional discussion experiences in order to ensure they could access additional evidence from their classmates to include in their work. Across classrooms students use checklists and rubrics to assess their work and determine their own next steps. As a result of this focused process, teachers support students in designing data-driven individual goals and plans that ensure student progress and increased levels of performance.
 - Ongoing teacher checks for student understanding are embedded practices at the school. Students work on wipe-off boards, conference with teachers, use hand gestures such as thumbs up to indicate understanding of lessons or thumbs down for support and “turn and tell,” that serve as gauges to teachers to correct student misunderstandings or provide additional support where needed. In addition, teachers use of checklist around key lesson concepts during student independent work time provides them with immediate feedback as to the level of student understanding, ensuring teachers make timely adjustments to instruction to meet the learning needs of students, enabling them to thoroughly understand lesson content.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the process of communicating high expectations to all constituencies to ensure effective mutual accountability for student achievement. (3.4)
 - A high expectation for all constituencies is included in the school’s clear and implicit vision. Extensive training provided to teachers during summer, after school sessions and with consultants ensures high expectations to teachers about Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), Citywide Instructional Expectations CIE), Positive Behavior

Systems (PBS) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) guideposts ensure these high expectations. School leaders commend teachers doing well, measured by the Danielson framework for teaching, through “shout outs,” written feedback and capture exemplary practices through the use of videos. Curriculum nights inform parents of the high expectations of CCLS and CIE and provide them with information about what is being taught at the school. Monthly newsletters remind parents of The 3 R Way, a system for regulating student behaviors and highlighting student work. Teachers hold class celebrations and share student work with parents and families. Staff is accessible to discuss student progress and concerns. However, parents state updates about student progress do not yet fully and thoroughly provide them with information to offer targeted and timely support to their children. As a result, there are missed opportunities for parents to successfully partner with the school to support their children toward high expectations that prepare them for the next levels.

- Deepen the work of teacher teams to promote the continued analysis of classroom practices that result in shared improvements in instruction in order to support student progress. (4.2)
 - Teachers meet twice a week in either vertical or grade teams to analyze student work and data. The vast majority of teachers use of a consultancy protocol guides their structured inquiry and norms much of the teacher team work. Teacher team discussions focus on student close reading of text across pages to ensure they are reading complex material. Teachers use a two point rubric to examine student written responses to questions about these texts and determine strengths, areas of need and next steps to support student progress. For example, teachers determined students need more time for discussion about the text, special education students required more time to negotiate the text and team conversations reveal that student stop and jots about the texts did not yet fully support their writing. However, focus on pedagogical methods to cohesively ensure teachers have the tools to support all students, including English language learners, in reading difficult text and to support student progress toward meeting school goals were not specifically addressed, thus preventing school-wide instructional coherence in strengthening teacher’s repertoire of skills to improve student learning outcomes.
 - Teacher’s consistent analysis of student work and use of warm and cool feedback characterizes the work of teacher grade team meetings. Review of student work by teachers resulted in determining the implementation of the addition of approaches and strategies for students to use to strengthen their work products. Student use of post-it notes, graphic organizers and student text chunking are key strategies that now support individual and groups of students. However, strategic instructional practices that have demonstrated moving high performing students ahead of current levels of performance were not practiced by all teachers, thus hindering the ability of this group of students from demonstrating learning beyond mastery levels.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: x396	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