

Quality Review Report

2013-2014

Mary McLeod Bethune

Elementary School 092

222 West 134 Street

New York

NY 10030

Principal: Rosa Davila

Dates of review: January 14 – 15, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Mary McLeod Bethune is an elementary school with 268 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 65% Black, 31% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian and 2% other students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Exceptional in-house support services provide students with consistent conditions to succeed socially and academically. (1.4)
 - “Love and respect come first” are the core tenets espoused by the school leader. The principal’s insistence that all staff treat students with love and respect is evident throughout the entire school community. Parents state that students have “good relationships” with staff and that students learn in a “family oriented” atmosphere which they fully appreciate. Both students and parents also note that they can turn to teachers, the principal, guidance counselor and other staff, to help resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with learning. One fifth grade student stated that the staff expects “sophisticated, mature” behavior from them and teachers insist that they must always be courteous to each other. Various rituals and routines encourage student voice and students openly share their thoughts and feelings. The principal shared that students regularly visit her office during lunch and on one such meeting, a student made the suggestion for a writing contest. The ensuing contest entitled “*If I were a pencil*”, was a popular initiative which generated increased interest and rigor, evident in some students’ essays. During the large student group meeting students shared that they earn rewards for appropriate behaviors and provide suggestions on lunch menu choices. Based on mild infractions, the principal also encourages students to determine the consequences for their own specific misbehaviors so students feel that teachers and administrators respect their thoughts. As a result, their leadership skills are cultivated, bolstering their self-esteem, as evidenced by classroom visits and conversations with student groups.
 - The school’s after school program ensures that students have access to homework assistance, sports, arts and other enrichment activities on a daily basis. Partnerships with Experience Corps (tutoring support to students in grades K-2), Opus (dance and vocal instruction) and Harlem Children’s Zone (classroom and after school academic support), coordinate well with school-based support structures to address the social-emotional and academic needs of students and their families. Parents stated that the principal and other school staff know individual students by name and develop close confidential relationships with a number of students. Students who are tutored are demonstrating better academic success in class, with increased levels of proficiency in reading noted on running records. The guidance counselor provides help to strategically link parents with specific agencies and services as needed. There are a number of assemblies focused on anti-bullying awareness. This successful initiative has reduced bullying complaints. Additionally, attendance team members utilize a laser-like focus when reviewing attendance data. Noted trends result in focused interventions and rewards. Classroom teachers highlight *Students of the Month* on hallway bulletin boards and students who are never late or have perfect monthly attendance, earn “scholar dollars” which they can use to shop in the school’s store. At the end of the school year students are rewarded with an attendance incentive trip to Sesame Place. These targeted efforts

result in current monthly class and grade attendance rates of 90% or higher, a decrease in the number of tardy students, as well as a very low number of incidents on the On-Line Occurrence Reporting System.

- School leaders share their high expectations with staff and effectively communicate with families who have high praise for the school, resulting in productive home-school partnerships that support student success. (3.4)
 - The administrative team and teacher leaders planned and participated in a summer retreat in order to review and norm expectations for the school year. The principal consistently communicates her instructional focus and plans and conducts professional development sessions to help teachers fully understand the Danielson Framework. Teachers continue to avail themselves of informal after school meetings with the principal, entitled “Tuesdays Treat.” During these meetings teachers receive additional instructional support. Teacher teams are granted tremendous autonomy and teacher leaders prepare and share meeting minutes and agendas with the principal. These teacher leaders indicate that their ability to have a voice in shaping curricula and instructional decisions contributes to their leadership growth and sense of empowerment. The continuous and transparent cycle of support creates high levels of individual and team accountability, leading to improved teaching practices and student learning, as evidenced by classroom visits and student work products.
 - Parents stated that they requested additional Saturday academic test preparation for students and that this request was fulfilled. They also indicate that the principal’s open door policy encourages both school leaders and families to mutually exchange ideas and discuss initiatives aligned to the school’s goals and principal’s expectations. Families help chaperone trips and participate in classroom activities such as publishing parties. Some teachers send home curriculum updates so that parents are kept abreast of learning objectives and expectations for specific units of study. Additionally, at the beginning of the school year, all families receive a parent handbook detailing the school’s schedules and policies. Staff members also send home monthly progress reports apprising parents/guardians of students’ performance levels in reading, writing and math as well as attendance and personal/social growth updates. Staff shared that their goal is to prepare students for middle school demands. In one fourth grade class, student groups are named after varied city colleges such as Hunter and Brooklyn colleges. As such, during their respective meetings, parents, staff and students reported heightened awareness of college expectations and students’ increased aspirations for college enrollment and high-level careers.
- Critical analysis of a variety of student performance data provide school staff with a comprehensive view of the students’ strengths and next steps, resulting in interventions that positively impact student performance. (2.2)
 - Teachers use assorted streams of data from varied sources, including running records, performance tasks, end of unit tests, conference notes, rubric scores, and teacher prepared tests, to gauge student understanding of the taught curricula. Teachers chart math progress noting pre, mid and end of unit progress. In a math class, the teacher used formative data to group students and provided targeted support in

order to ensure that they met the learning objective, while across the school, teachers provide actionable written feedback to students, noting strengths and next steps. As such, students are becoming cognizant of the connections between tasks and the expectations espoused by the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Consequently, teachers are demonstrating ways of understanding and sharing feedback on students' assessment results relative to select standards, with the focus on increased student outcomes, as noted in teachers' assessment binders.

- Teachers create common performance tasks such as the fourth grade task on personal narratives. Teachers analyze student work products, discuss findings and suggest instructional strategies to further support students' growth. Results from assessments are maintained in data binders and are used to identify strengths and needs, as well as promote ongoing conversations and reflection. The principal and teachers use these results, including student work products, to measure student progress toward specific goals and to make needed changes to the curricula. For example, several teachers noted that, at times, after a review of student work products, if they note that students had not fully grasped specific concepts, they re-teach in order to ensure mastery. Teachers review results and, in consultation with the principal, create individual plans for students. As such, teachers formulate specific action plans to address student needs.
- Administrators support staff through frequent observations with specific feedback aligned to the Danielson framework that support student performance and improves teacher practice. (4.1)
 - The principal uses a tiered system of teacher support based on formal and informal observations. During individual conversations with teachers, the principal infuses formative and summative assessment results, including student work products, and uses this information to tailor professional development sessions to identified teacher needs on a weekly, bi-monthly or monthly schedule. New teachers receive mentoring support from experienced pedagogues. A review of the observation calendar and written feedback provide evidence that the principal shares frequent, specific, and timely feedback with staff across Danielson domains and components. An Advance talent coach visits the school and supports supervisors on the accuracy and meaningfulness of feedback. At the beginning of the school year, the principal met with teachers who self-assessed their needs and established specific goals. For example, one teacher's goal aligned to Danielson component 3B states that she will "improve strategies for formulating higher order thinking questions in group discussions to promote student thinking, increase discourse and classroom rigor." As a result of multiple forms and sources of feedback, teachers continue to refine their pedagogical practices and exhibit understanding of grade appropriate strategies that elicit basic student understanding.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the alignment between teacher practice and the school's beliefs about learning to ensure high levels of engagement and thinking so that all students reach their potential. (1.2)

- During visits to classrooms it is evident that, in order to meet students' needs, teachers use scaffolding tools such as graphic organizers and manipulatives to support writing and math. This however, is not the practice in every class; therefore not all students receive the academic support necessary to accelerate their learning. Although students sit in groups, teachers do not always develop appropriately challenging tasks. As such, some students do not productively struggle with complex texts and some teachers do not yet implement lessons that allow for sufficient student engagement in higher order thinking. Consequently, some teachers miss out on demonstrating strategies to sufficiently engage students in higher order thinking so that all work products and activities are cognitively demanding of all learners, especially students with disabilities and those performing at the highest achievement levels.
- Teachers are beginning to employ open-ended questions to spark discussions and students in some classrooms are questioning each other's assumptions and ideas. For example, during a math lesson the teacher continually asked probing questions and students shared varied strategies, paraphrased responses and questioned each other. However, in some classrooms, questions and answers still remain between teacher and individual student. Consequently, thought-provoking questions leading to conversations that give students the chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds, and use questions as a way to further learning, are not yet the norm across classes and grades. This results in uneven levels of student thinking, as noted in student work products and as evidenced by limited participation of students in discussions across classrooms.
- Expand the process of refinement of Common Core aligned curricula across all grades and subject areas, in order to build coherence and emphasize rigorous skills to prepare students for the next level. (1.1)
 - Although academic tasks at times emphasize higher order skills, tasks are not consistently rigorous enough to challenge students performing at varied ability levels. Over the summer and at the beginning of the school year, teachers participated in professional development for the newly adopted English language arts and math curricula. They integrate CCLS into math and English language arts units of study. However, these practices are not yet evident across all grades and subjects. For example, although refinement of the social studies and science units provide evidence of essential questions, at times tasks lack rigor and alignment to state standards across grades and student work products, at times, do not demonstrate immersion in the unit. This is a work in progress and teacher teams continue to make further adjustments in order to ensure that the demands of the standards are embedded across all disciplines. Additionally, students with disabilities are not consistently provided with grade level tasks to challenge them and some independent tasks are not well aligned to the teaching point, thus precluding students from broadening their knowledge base.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Mary McLeod Bethune	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?		X					
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?				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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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