

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Thomas A Dooley

Elementary School 107

**167-02 45th AVENUE
QUEENS
NY,11358**

Principal: LORI CUMMINGS

**Dates of review: February 6- 7, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Thomas A Dooley is an elementary school with 969 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 29% Hispanic, 17% White, and 52% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

What the school does well

- The principal makes data informed organizational decisions and effectively uses resources to support the school's instructional goals to guide improvements in student work products. (1.3)
 - As school wide year-to-year data trends revealed gaps in student writing skills, the principal, in consultation with staff and the school leadership team, channeled resources to fund curricula materials as well as staff developers from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project to provide teachers and the administration professional development to increase understanding of the Common Core Writing Standards, the instructional shifts, as well as writing pedagogy in the classroom. Additionally, to align the school's writing goal to 21st century learning, the principal has obtained local grants to provide students with increased opportunities to use technology to enhance writing curriculum and writing products. These efforts have led to increased teacher use of writing process skills as evident in improvements in classroom environments that demonstrate effective writing strategies such as increased student stamina, fluency, use of text based evidence, and understanding of writing genres, as reflected in well-written writing tasks within and across all grades.
 - School leaders have structured staff and student time to align with new curricula initiatives as well as the needs revealed within student data. For example, student progress and achievement data revealed that prior organization of a homogeneous Academic Intervention class on each grade level, comprised of the bottom third performing students, as well as English language learners and students with disabilities, did not yield growth for these students. Working in collaboration with staff and her network, the principal increased the number of special education teachers and opened an integrated co-teaching class on each grade. In order to effectively implement this new structure, the principal formed partnerships and provided professional development for teachers to support them with instructional models, best practices, as well as creating multiple entry points into the curriculum. As a result of this organization, teachers are sharing responsibility for specific groups of students and feel they are better able to help and accelerate student-learning outcomes.
- The principal and staff foster an inclusive community and provide students with a nurturing environment that supports social and academic growth. (1.4)
 - The school community prides itself on their commitment to promoting learning experiences that address all aspects of student learning. This is achieved through programs and activities that infuse the arts during assemblies, visiting artists, and student performances through partnerships with Brooklyn Conservatory, Together in Dance, puppetry residency, Parents as Art Partners and a yearly concert entitled Music in the Air that includes performances by teachers, students and parents. Additional teams and clubs such as cheerleading, basketball, glee club, dance troupe, theater group, swimming, and student government provide students with opportunities to be part of their school community beyond the classroom. Currently students are engaged in a school wide debate project where they are working with the principal to decide whether or not to continue to serve chocolate milk during lunch. Students are

conducting research around health and nutrition, polling their peers and making presentations that will culminate in a student vote. This school culture welcomes students to participate in their community; they take pride in their school and feel their voices matter.

- This year the school's theme, kindness, is reinforced through a book of the month program where teachers work with their classes to build a supportive and welcoming school environment. This theme transcends through the school and is evident in teacher/student and student/student interactions. Additionally, to address attendance needs of students, the school hosts a morning monitoring program where students are given jobs such as feeding fish or working to help pre-kindergarten students. This focus on building a nurturing atmosphere provides students with a sense of belonging and they say they feel supported and cared for.
- The principal's deep review of data has guided the development of a list of clear goals and plans that are used to guide curricula and instructional improvements throughout the school. (3.1)
 - School wide goals focus on supporting teacher effectiveness along the continuum of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, increasing student skills in writing about reading with a focus on deeply supporting those students scoring in the bottom third of each grade, improving student outcomes in real world math problem solving skills, and improving parent engagement regarding home/school relationships around college and career readiness. The principal works closely with her network and data specialist to analyze data on an ongoing basis using a variety of data sources, such as State assessment results, student writing, and math task samples, and conducted a deep audit of curricula and classroom walkthrough feedback. She then collaborates with her instructional leads and school leadership team to plan and participate in the goal setting process that includes a multi-year curricula change strategy. The principal rolled out year one of the school's vision to the school community that includes professional development in curricula options and pedagogy. Structures, such as teacher leads meeting weekly with teacher teams, are in place to support this work. As a result, teachers are engaging in the curriculum planning process, are receiving supports to build instructional capacity, and the principal is able to identify key targets such as identified improvements in quality of writing, and student ability to write about process in math, that are leading to better outcomes for students.
 - Parents say they are well informed and are active participants in the process of selecting appropriate curricula options as well as the design of school wide goals and action plans. They also recognize that the school is at the beginning stages of goal implementation, are well aware of the school's improvement vision and can identify key adjustments in practices, such as use of student tasks and rubrics that the school has effected to shape pathways for improvement in student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Further support staff in curricula and task development to more effectively integrate key standards that align to a broader understanding of students needs in order to promote higher order skills to accelerate student progress. (1.1)
 - Although the school is working with staff developers from Teachers College to gain an understanding of the writing curriculum and have begun to use planning documents modeled around The Understanding

by Design framework to structure both literacy and math curriculum, teachers are just beginning to identify, target, and align key standards and the instructional shifts in order to appropriately meet the specific needs of students in the school. Additionally, staff is at the nascent stages in acquiring a clear understanding of the expectations of Go Math as well as how this program aligns to what students should know, understand, and be able to do at each level within the Common Core Learning Standards. Because curricula coherence is only beginning to be established within and across grades, it is difficult to measure whether curricula options chosen by the school are effective in providing appropriate challenge to meet the needs of all learners.

- At this stage of curricula and task planning, teachers throughout the school are building learning plans into units of study that emphasize content skills and areas of focus, such as embedding deeper problem solving strategies and infusing vocabulary. Culminating academic tasks address these focus areas. However, at this time, there are inconsistent practices in the effective analysis of student data and work products in order for teachers to reflect on the level of rigor of content and skills taught limiting the schools' ability make accurate adjustments to curriculum based on student outcomes so that all students have access to the curriculum and student learning is maximized.
- Further develop teacher pedagogy to ensure instructional strategies and classroom activities align to the curriculum and include appropriate scaffolds to maximize student engagement, participation, and ownership of their work. (1.2)
 - The school wide belief of how students learn best centers around the use of the workshop model and includes opportunities for students to engage in independent as well as group activities. The principal and faculty support this belief through a school wide focus around improving classroom environments following the criteria in the Danielson Framework such as accessibility and setting expectations for learning through instructional charts within classrooms that represent all content related to current units of study. However, at this time teacher practices and classroom tasks do not appropriately challenge students to bring them to high levels of thinking and participation in their work. For example, in one math class, although students were engaged in a math task, many had incorrect answers and were unable to articulate which strategies and supports they used to solve the problem, thus preventing them from making necessary adjustments to their learning. In an English language arts classroom, although students were engaged in conversations about text, many were unable to articulate the relationship between the task of analyzing the text and the examples they were using to support their findings relative to the lesson's focus. Finally, across classrooms although students sat in groupings, many of the lessons were teacher directed or specific groups were not provided with suitable scaffolds to help them independently master the task. As a result, some students are not deeply challenged; others cannot clearly articulate the purpose behind their work, while still others cannot show mastery.
- Deepen the alignment of assessment practices, use of rubrics, and feedback to students to key standards to allow better-informed instructional decisions to address student-learning needs more effectively. (2.2)
 - Although there is evidence that the school is using common assessments such as pre- and post-unit tests, Teachers College running records, and standard rubrics and checklists across grades and content areas that include opportunities for teacher feedback and peer and self-

reflection, the school is still working to develop an understanding of how to use these tools as viable data to monitor quality of curriculum and instruction and plan suitable adjustments to meet the learning needs of students. For example, when discussing work with students, many described rubrics as a scoring guide; few were able to explain how rubrics could be used to set goals, gauge his/her progress, or to develop a clear understanding of a particular standard. Additionally, as teachers have just begun to work with curriculum and the standards, they are not fully utilizing common assessments to guide their work. Therefore, feedback to students is inconsistent in highlighting strengths and weaknesses related to key standards. Consequently, without clear systems to measure student progress, it is difficult for teachers to assess the impact of curriculum and their instructional decisions on student achievement and for students to articulate their strengths and next steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Thomas A Dooley	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		

Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly...	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

To what extent does the school ...	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

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 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
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