

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

William C. Hughley

Primary School/Intermediate School Q116

**107-25 Wren Place
Queens
NY 11433**

Principal: Debra L. Farrow

Dates of review: May 19 – 20, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS/IS 116 is a primary-intermediate school with 761 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 67% Black, 22% Hispanic, 2% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 12% 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 91.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teaching practices and lessons across classrooms are consistently aligned to the Danielson Framework so that students have multiple entry points to meet their learning needs, resulting in improved performance. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, teachers align lessons to the school's curriculum, which is now based fully on the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), by using the standards as a guide when they plan. For example, a sixth grade math teacher expanded on the treatment of ratios in the text by adding pertinent details she had researched online. Teachers design and deliver classroom instruction using the workshop model informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school community shares the belief that students learn best by active engagement after explicit teaching, demonstration and modeling. Teachers create a culture of diligent effort and high energy by requiring that students collaborate with each other and move around the room if necessary. As a result, there is consistent school-wide implementation of collaborative learning experiences within workshop model instruction, and flexible grouping to foster grade level work among the English language learners and special education students.
 - Teachers create daily opportunities for students to respond to higher order thinking questions, ask questions themselves and make their thinking visible to their peers. Vigorous discussion fosters cognitive engagement and deepens comprehension so that students assist and tutor each other as they produce their work. In a second grade class, students wrote on different graphic organizers about the traits of the main character and a secondary character. They then explained why they chose the characters using textual evidence. In a grade 8 math class, students worked on a series of problems about determining efficient routes to different destinations in Washington, D.C. The city map was transformed into a coordinate grid and students had to make decisions while discussing their predictions and hypotheses. English language learners and students with disabilities received Tier 1 and 2 questions as entry points to establish their comprehension of the lessons before proceeding to produce the required work in their groups. As a result of the rigorous lessons, students are able to demonstrate improvement in their writing as indicated in their work products in their notebooks and portfolios.
- School leaders and faculty effectively use a wide range of assessments that guide instructional decisions and inform planning, resulting in a clear understanding of student performance and how to best serve them. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms and grade levels, teachers and teacher teams use a plethora of standardized, curriculum-based reading and math assessments as well as other tools such as conferencing notes and exit slips to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. The new curricula materials have pre-, mid- and post-unit assessments embedded in their structures. Teachers regularly deliver quizzes, writing-on-demand

assessments, running records and checks for understanding during class to identify where students are in the learning process. As a result, teachers make changes in their lesson plans and output to meet students' learning needs. For example, a seventh grade math teacher who was teaching simultaneous equations with a common variable used the students' responses to her guiding questions to explain the idea of consistency on both sides of an equation.

- Teams of teachers, with active support from the school's data specialist, meet weekly to analyze formative and summative data results from teacher-created assessments, rubrics and student work samples to hone in on the needs of English language learners and special education students across the school. As a result of this ongoing work, teachers have supplemented the curriculum to include supports such as experience charts, sentence starters, academic vocabulary word walls and web-based programs that address literacy and numeracy skills and improve student outcomes.
- School leaders make intentional organizational decisions related to student grouping, programs and teacher collaboration to ensure that students produce meaningful work products. (1.3)
 - The scheduling of common preparation periods and frequent opportunities for cross-grade teamwork increases collaboration and collegial understanding of learning connections through the grades. This approach supports instructional initiatives and results in increased uniformity in teacher practice. Writing skills are taught and reinforced across classrooms and across subjects. The principal has streamlined the elementary and middle school schedules intentionally to support harmonious connections across the grades and to bridge the gaps in expectations and preparation of the whole faculty. In spite of a challenging budget environment, the principal hired an assistant principal who could focus on the middle grades and support the Middle School Quality Initiative. As a result, the whole school has a cohesiveness of action in improving instruction, thereby providing students with challenging academic tasks. For example, all subject areas are planned with literacy and vocabulary development as the inter-disciplinary baseline.
 - The instructional cabinet screens resumes and observes demonstration lessons by all candidates for positions at the school. This provides the team with an opportunity to share the school's instructional beliefs and goals in a clear yet unobtrusive manner. The physical location and grouping of the kindergarten through grade 5 students, including integrated team teaching classes, facilitates collaboration among specialist teachers to better meet the needs of English language learners and special education students. English as a second language teachers and special education teachers share methodologies for building oral language in struggling students. As a result, student subgroups receive significant attention in their preparation for colleges and careers.
- The school leaders consistently use the Danielson Framework for classroom observations and provide explicit feedback and next steps resulting in improved teacher practice. (4.1)

- Teacher team leaders are selected to mentor teachers and support school-wide growth in professional practices within the school's instructional focus. The school community has embraced the Danielson Framework for Teaching, uses its tenets as the language for exemplary practice, and all informal observations are based on it. The principal provides feedback to teachers within two weeks of each observation so they can implement the suggested refinements into their practice. As a result, teachers have become clearer on the standard for instructional excellence they expect in the school and the student work they expect their pupils to produce.
- The principal meets continuously with the staff on a one-to-one basis. She provides them with explicit, individualized feedback based on her low inference observations of their teaching. This feedback is supplemented with an examination of student work and the progress students are making in the class. The principal uses the Danielson Framework rubric to describe teachers' strengths, weaknesses and the different steps each person needs to take to grow as a teacher. This year teachers are engaged in work to improve the critical thinking skills of their students using text-based evidence for writing, speaking and presenting. After the principal gives feedback, she then provides supports including embedded coaching and professional development. As a result of this regular cycle of assessment and support, teachers experience professional growth, as evidenced by first grade teachers who were approaching their completion of probation.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the curriculum focus across all grades and subjects to increase school-wide consensus on rigorous tasks and materials that cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - The school has done a purposeful evaluation of its curricula even prior to purchasing recommended materials to align with the CCLS requirements. The teacher teams developed curriculum maps that enable them to adjust their pacing calendar when deliveries were initially late. The school has identified key connections to the CCLS for math, and student tasks encourage problem solving and explanations to indicate understanding. Teachers successfully promote students' academic conversations and positive work habits particularly for English language learners and special education students. Across grades and subjects, college and career readiness is emphasized in differentiated tasks, multiple solution paths and scaffolded activities with habits of mind that coach persistence. However, the vast majority of teachers in the school have common branch licenses and the middle school grades have challenges with the depth of curricula and content required as the teachers become familiar with the new material, thereby hindering students' achieving mastery in some subject areas.
- Enhance the communication of high expectations to staff, students and families so that the community works more collaboratively to meet school-wide goals. (3.4)

- The school leaders and faculty communicate high expectations to the school community through parent workshops on the CCLS, school discipline policies, new state assessments and new promotional criteria. Students participate in conferences and small group activities with the guidance counselor to improve their self-esteem and develop their social skills so they can achieve their college and career readiness goals. Parents give feedback that they value the school's efforts in communicating high expectations for students' academic and social-emotional success. The leaders communicate high expectations to the staff based on the Danielson Framework and they receive a newsletter each week from the administration. However, students are still uncertain about the school-wide system of accountability. This has led to routinized high school choices and a misplaced emphasis on academic tracks even for highly artistic students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: William C. Hughley	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