Quality Review Report

2013-2014

The Philip H. Sheridan Elementary School

11X021

715 East 225th Street
Bronx, New York 10466

Principal: Joyce B. Coleman

Dates of review: April 9 - 10, 2014
Reviewer: Mimi Fortunato

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Philip H. Sheridan School is an elementary school with 710 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 71% Black, 25% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal maximizes resources by integrating instructional technology, building strong partnerships, and programming targeted interventions for learners that provide students with access to support and increased learning opportunities. (1.3)

    - Budgetary allocations provide teachers with technology such as a shared laptop cart, Smart boards, and desktop computers in all classrooms. The principal has invested in the purchase of licenses for instructional software such as Imagine Learning for English language learners, and Starmatica and Time to Know, online programs, which support students in the development of literacy and math skills. The construction of a new Library/Media Center is in the design stage, with new desktops and software that will provide expanded technological integrated-learning opportunities for all students. In addition, an auditorium upgrade is near completion, with the installation of new seats and a state of the art lighting and sound system that will be utilized during the extended day dance program, during full school and grade level celebrations, and for Town Halls. The school has established partnerships with the Boy Scouts and a Basketball Sports Mentoring Program, activities that support leadership and social-emotional development for participating students. A long-standing partnership with the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) provides an expanded learning program after school and during school vacations. This use of resources and partnership development supports progress towards the school's instructional goals that students engage in rich and varied learning experiences, and produce meaningful work products.

    - Strategic teaching assignments include the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Resource Center lead teacher, who provides full-time coaching, modeling, and mentoring support, to teachers in the newly established UFT Resource Center. Additionally, the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) room is staffed by a full-time teacher who supports the implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention (PBIS) program by providing intervention and instruction to referred students, and by facilitating professional development to teachers in the implementation of the character education and behavior intervention Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program. The principal has also assigned two Academic Intervention Services (AIS)/ Response to Intervention (RtI) teachers to provide support to identified students in grades kindergarten through 5 in six week cycles. After completing each cycle, the RtI team reviews student progress and monitors data and student achievement with RtI specialists. Students then return to their classroom setting to receive support from teachers with the specific strategies and resources that were utilized during their cycle of intervention. A certified Wilson Reading program specialist provides targeted instruction supporting foundational skills to build comprehension and literacy to students with disabilities in grades 3 through 5 in an extended day program. In addition, the English as a second language expanded learning program provides focused instruction on literacy to English language learners using the online Imagine Learning program. All classroom teachers identify students and provide small group targeted academic intervention during their literacy and math lessons throughout the week. Furthermore, students have opportunities for small group academic intervention and test sophistication support through a well-attended Saturday Academy that takes place from January through June and has over 300 students in attendance on a regular basis. Enrichment and athletic opportunities

are provided by the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC) program that takes place after school from 2:30-6:00 PM daily and during school vacations in December, February, April, and during the summer. Thus, the use of resources allows for practices and programs that provide learners with intervention and enrichment opportunities that support skill development and strengthen college and career readiness for all students.

- The instructional team has established a safe environment through the implementation of programs that promote students' personal/academic development, support teachers' professional growth, and deepen family engagement. (1.4)

    - The school has implemented PBIS, a discipline and social-emotional support that communicates clear expectations for behavior and recognizes and rewards improvement and achievement. Students earn Personal Best, Act Responsibly, Work and Play Safely, Show Respect (PAWS) tickets and rewards as recognition for positive behavior, and grade level and full-school community town halls provide opportunities to celebrate students' growth. The school, selected as a lab site for the Competent Kids, Caring Communities (CKCC) program,, which is designed to support the academic and social success of students and build a strong home-school partnership also provides a comprehensive research-based elementary school level curriculum of weekly lessons that encourage students' social-emotional growth and the development of effective academic and personal behaviors. The school reports a 40% decrease in high-level incidents and a 64% decrease in student suspensions compared to the 2012-2013 school year, attributing the improvement to the implementation of these programs. Students, parents, and teachers affirmed the school's intentional efforts to maintain a positive and inclusive school culture that has reinforced students' sense of safety and membership within a small community that is committed to their success.

    - The PBIS team meets weekly to plan interventions and frequent celebrations, and disseminates program updates to the full school community. The Competent Kids, Caring Communities (CKCC) program provides the school with a coach who supports teachers' professional development in the implementation of the CKCC curriculum, and teachers participate in professional development provided through a partnership with the Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) program. The parent coordinator facilitates phone and mail outreach efforts to families, and organizes well-attended annual events that strengthen the home-school partnership, such as a Father-Daughter Dance, Mother-Son Dance, and Mother-Daughter Tea Party. The school has instituted an annual Family Pajama Reading Party, where families are treated to a Saturday breakfast, receive books as gifts, and participate in an activity where they read to their children under the guidance of members of the instructional team, building parents' skills in supporting their children's literacy development. In addition, the school contracts with the Learning Leaders Family Volunteer Program, which trains parents to be effective volunteers and increases their knowledge, skills and confidence in supporting their children's educational development. These professional development supports for teachers aligned to the PBIS, CKCC, and ESR programs, and opportunities for structured family engagement are aligned with the school's goal of engaging all members of the community in supporting students' social and emotional growth.

- School leaders plan professional development opportunities for staff, and provide frequent feedback to families regarding student social growth and academic progress, fostering a culture of high expectations for all members of the school community. (3.4)

- School leaders communicate high expectations for professionalism aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching through weekly memos titled, “A Look at the Week”. Through feedback to teachers, professional learning opportunities emphasizing the importance of establishing a respectful classroom environment, planning Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned instruction, engaging students, and effective use of questioning and discussion techniques, staff are provided with relevant information to hone their skills in more deeply engaging students in rich discussions and rigorous and meaningful tasks. A fully staffed on-site Teacher Resource Center supports ongoing professional development for teachers, and there is opportunity for off-site professional development, such as the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) room teacher’s recent participation in an eight week Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) training program, which will be provided in an abbreviated version to all teachers on-site this spring. School leaders facilitate meetings to review teachers’ data binders and student progress, and to monitor teachers’ growth towards goals established in individual professional growth plans. Consequently, a culture of high expectations for professional learning has been created, and teachers are supported and held accountable for meeting established expectations.

- Workshops and events are designed for families, and include a range of foci including, Back to School Night, meeting the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) classroom and CCLS aligned exam expectations, developing college and career readiness, and financial planning for college. Students have an opportunity to participate in local college trips and tours, such as a recent field trip to Columbia University. Teachers prepare progress reports in addition to report cards, and communicate with parents on a regular basis by phone and via email. Parents shared that teachers regularly reach out to them with updates on their children’s’ progress, and offer guidance and support. These programs and structures reinforce the school’s expectations that students are engaged in their community and the home-school partnership is emphasized.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that curricula and tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills and are planned to provide access, engage, and challenge all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). (1.1)

    - The instructional team utilizes Ready Gen for English language arts and Go Math for math, and participates in ongoing collaborative curricula refinement. However, units of study and lesson plans are not consistent in planning for rigorous tasks and assignments, and lessons do not always incorporate higher order thinking questions and skills. For example, in a grade 3 math class, students were provided with a rigorous task of estimating and measuring the perimeter of polygons using inches and centimeters, with students strategically grouped and assigned tasks that scaffolded in complexity. However, in a mixed-grade English as a second language class, the teacher provided all students with low-level worksheets that contained ‘fill-in-the-blank’ responses to questions, asking students to match consonant digraph sounds out of context, evidencing limited teacher planning to support and challenge the diverse learners in the group and with insufficient connections to learning fiction or non-fiction text. Consequently, As a result of inconsistent planning for tasks that emphasize higher-order skills, there is a lack of coherence in the integration of the

instructional shifts and in providing access to rigorous academic tasks, limiting the development of higher order skills by all learners.

- Teacher teams meet on a regular basis to revise curricula maps and plan units of study, lesson plans, tasks, summative assessments, and tasks aligned to the CCLS. However, a review of unit and lesson plans provided evidence of inconsistent planning for effective scaffolds or multiple entry points for the diverse learners in the school, including English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, a grade 4 literacy lesson that asked students to write a description using sensory details and idioms included supports for targeted students, and an extension activity for others. However, in a grade 5 math class on graphing points on a coordinate plane, all students were asked to complete different textbook pages of similar problems. In this lesson, scaffolds and supports were not evident, nor were students who were ready to move to the next level challenged. As a result of inconsistency in teacher planning for strategic grouping, scaffolds, and learning extensions, the capacity to challenge and engage all students is hampered.

- Strengthen teacher pedagogy in providing effective instructional supports, extensions, and the use of questioning and discussion techniques, so that all learners are engaged in rigorous tasks and high-level discussions. (1.2)

  - Although teachers are asked to plan lessons where students are expected to think critically and demonstrate their high-level thinking, teaching practice in implementing lessons with access and instructional supports to ensure that students demonstrate mastery of these outcomes was inconsistent across classrooms. For example, a grade 3 integrated co-teaching class math lesson asking students to compare fractions provided students with an opportunity to rotate through a series of workstations. In this class, scaffolded supports and activities included small group targeted instruction with either of the two cooperating teachers, and the opportunity to utilize the Starmatica online math program, make use of math manipulatives such as fraction tiles, or complete a set of enrichment problems. However, in a first grade integrated co-teaching writing lesson on the book, “My Rows and Piles of Coins”, teachers provided limited supports to the diverse learners in the group, and the few students who were provided with a sheet of paper that included two “sorting boxes” were unclear as to the use of this graphic organizer that did not effectively support the writing process. Throughout class visits, there was uneven use of effective grouping or scaffolds to ensure access for the diverse learners. This resulted in inconsistent teaching strategies to allow for student engagement, with a number of students observed not able to demonstrate mastery of learning objectives.

  - In classroom observations, student participation in rigorous discussion was inconsistent, and student work products did not always demonstrate high levels of thinking. For example, a grade 2 math lesson on finding the total value of a group of coins, the teacher asked students questions that scaffolded in difficulty such as, “Where can you look to find information about the value of each coin?”, and “Do you think it is helpful to have like coins together when finding the value of a group of coins?” In this class, students rotated through workstations that included an online drag and drop coin matching game, a calculating coin value card game, and small group targeted instruction with the teacher, with all students observed engaging in group and partner discussions. However, in a kindergarten lesson on a text, “Weather Words and What They Mean” with a learning objective of identifying main idea, key details of a text,

and the author's purpose, the teacher-led discussion consisted of posing low-level questions asking students to recall weather words from the book, such as, "What is the story about?", "What are words that you use to describe the weather?" In this class, few students were observed participating in the assigned group activity, and most students were unclear as to the expectations of the task. In most classrooms visited, full-class discussion was limited to call and response, with a limited number of students responding to teacher-generated questions. The result is that students are not consistently engaged in rich discussion and tasks that provide opportunities for higher-level thinking and meaningful levels of participation.

- Deepen teacher skill in the use of assessment data as well as student self-assessment to measure student progress, adjust instruction, and ensure that students are aware of next learning steps and progressing towards mastery of learning objectives. (2.2)

    - School leaders provide professional development to support teachers in creating assessments, analyzing results, and developing instructional plans for re-teaching skills that were not mastered. However, the use of assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction is not consistent across grades and classes. The first grade team was observed reviewing pieces of student' written work, and collaboratively identifying strategies to support student mastery of the assigned task. However, teachers participating in a fifth grade team meeting in which the group was analyzing a math performance based assessment were unable to share an understanding of where individual student performance was on the continuum of skill development, and they could not articulate clear next instructional steps that might move large groups of students to mastery. Throughout classes visited, rubrics that were used for task analysis varied in grading structure, content, and expectations, and the use of grade-wide common assessments to measure students' progress towards goals across subject areas was inconsistent. As a result, opportunities to make curricula and instructional revisions to support students' academic growth across all disciplines are limited.

    - School leaders expect that teachers plan a check for understanding during a lesson, and this was evident in a review of most lesson plans, although implementation was uneven. For example, in a grade 5 lesson plan comparing and contrasting the two texts, "Heart and Soul" and "Operation Clean Sweep", the teacher was observed noting formative assessment data, identifying which students had not yet mastered the expected skill, and which were able to think critically about the texts and to demonstrate that thinking in the assigned scaffolded tasks. However, in a grade 4 class lesson on narrative writing, students went to the board to select and order laminated cards with text, and the teacher simply stated "No" when students provided incorrect responses, leaving some students unclear as to the rationale behind the correct responses. Across classrooms visited, teacher practice did not consistently include checks for understanding, and most teachers were not observed using formative assessment data to make real-time effective instructional adjustments. In addition, students shared that they are not always clear regarding task expectations, outcomes or next steps needed for improvement. As a result of inconsistent teacher assessment practices to check for ongoing understanding, adjust instruction, and to provide students with opportunities for self-assessment, student progress towards mastery of learning objectives is impeded.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Philip H. Sheridan	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