

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Benjamin Franklin

Elementary School 055

**450 Saint Paul's Place
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Luis Torres

Dates of review: April 9 - 10, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Benjamin Franklin is an elementary school with 692 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 51% Black and 49% Hispanic, students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has a safe, nurturing environment and provides support for the academic and social emotional development of students. (1.4)
 - The school determined that students' social and emotional needs must first be supported before they are able to learn, resulting in a multi-service system to teach the whole child. The school expanded the current on-site medical clinic to include free health, psychiatric service with two full-time psychologists, vision, and dental services, and uses a grant to pay for a full-time coordinator of its multiple health programs. Furthermore, the school houses Graham Windham, their partner to support families and students through the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). The school's Positive and Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) includes school-wide expectations of the five B's: be responsible, be ready and prepared, be a reinforcement of positive behavior, be rigorous in your work, be real to yourself and others. An incentive program provides students, who are 'caught' following the five B's a token to add to the class collection which when the collection is completed the class receives rewards or a celebration. Mentors, adults on campus who are not grade level teachers, are part of an attendance committee and meet weekly to monitor students through multiple weekly 'check-ins', thus decreasing chronic absenteeism. Additionally, the school has become a Therapeutic Crisis Intervention Systems (TCIS) site that trains its staff to support students in "learning developmentally appropriate and constructive ways to deal with feelings of frustration, failure, anger, and pain." While visiting a special education class, a student who was resting in a self-selected a 'time-out', calmly returned to his desk on his own to complete his assignment, without an emotional eruption. This system provides students a way to remain in the classroom, not disrupt others, and gain confidence. Together, these programs have decreased the number of incidents and suspensions year to date from 57 to 5. To provide student voice, the school has created a student government that recently brought some restroom issues to the principal and head custodian, who listened and acted. Students said, "They listened to us, fixing stalls, removing graffiti, and consistently replenishing soap and towels." As a result, student voice is welcomed and valued. Together, administration, teachers and students have co-created a safe and supportive environment that is conducive to student and adult learning.
- The school thoughtfully uses resources, student and teacher time, and programming, all aligned with school goals and focused on improving student achievement and pedagogical practice. (1.3)
 - The school has implemented a technology plan that includes installing 32 security cameras and a security station at the main entrance, completing SMART board installation and staff training, providing additional computers in all classes, and opening a second computer lab for reading language arts intervention programs. The existing computer lab, dedicated to use of SuccessMaker by every student in grades 3 through 5, and the new computer lab for Waterford, for every student in kindergarten through grade 2, are venues that, enable students to receive additional instructional support. During Response to Intervention (RTI), provided within the school

day, all students use the appropriate program two to three periods a week, resulting in an increase in student achievement as measured by internal data reports. To educate the whole child, the principal has developed over 40 partnerships, thus developing a model of community engagement. The partnership with the health clinic provided services for 663 students of the 849 enrolled last year and so far is surpassing that number this year. Fordham University provides professional development for teachers of English language learners and Lehman College provides after school math tutoring for students. The school partnered with Generation Ready, so teachers receive professional development and coaching on the newly adopted curricula. SCAN (Supportive Children's Advocacy Network) Community Based Organization (CBO) provides students with one hour of after-school academic tutoring followed by one hour of recreational activities, and serves more than half the students enrolled. Thus, the school's technology, use of resources, consultant coaches, and partnerships, are aligned to and support the school's instructional goals focused on improving student achievement and pedagogy.

- The principal created a master schedule allowing for weekly teacher meetings, grade level, vertical, and data teams that meet on Wednesdays, and as a result of a School Based Option (SBO) vote, the school has changed one of the extended day periods so every teacher has a double preparation period enabling staff to stay for one of the meetings. Teachers stated that they find the meetings helpful, as they have been able to unpack both the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) and the two new curricula, and share ideas on pacing and planning using a protocol for looking at student work. One teacher showed how her first grade students were able to write paragraphs on the indoor hydroponic garden. Additionally, to promote teacher leadership, administration delegates leading partnerships/programs to teachers, so that they gain experience and can support students outside the classroom as well as inside. As a result, teachers' professional responsibilities are aligned to the school's goals to improve instruction and provide students with challenging academic tasks.
- Leadership develops a short list of school wide goals informed by trends in student performance that promote continued student growth and progress both academically and social-emotionally. (3.1)
 - Data-driven goals, aligned to the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), are consistently communicated to staff, students, and parents, thus providing all with an understanding of the school's high expectations. When asked about the school's goals, parents said, "The goals are to move the kids up especially in reading plus math using Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and get them ready for college now because we are not waiting for middle or high school to start." Additionally, parents know about the school goals because they were instrumental in helping develop them and see themselves as part of the team. One parent stated, "We don't need a crowd to make a change. We step in as a team and pull out as a team."
 - Based on a needs assessment, administration and grade team leaders determined the need for additional training on the two newly adopted curricula, classroom management, and the FFT. Therefore, administration conducted professional development so that teachers knew which domains

were the foci. "Questioning and student discussions using the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) with higher-order-thinking tasks are what has been the focus of these workshops and what administration expects to see in our classes." Also, the principal requested and funds were approved for six Saturday sessions that began in March 2014. One teacher stated, "Not only are we learning about the new curricula, but as someone who has been teaching for 19 years, I am excited to say that I found the training on classroom management so helpful I even use it in my personal life." Teachers are finding these sessions meet their needs to improve classroom practices school wide as aligned with the school goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen curricula development across content areas and grades to consistently incorporate tasks that emphasize higher-order thinking skills so that all learners are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - The math department has the support of the data specialist/math coach for curricula development. Teachers stated, "The data specialist/math coach will give us data and feedback on our students' achievement for the Go Math benchmark assessment and based on students' deficient skills she will give lesson suggestions plus a directed homework packet to remediate those skills." Although this adapts overall to students' needs, the assignments do not yet provide access for all learners by groups of students within classes, but remains "one size fits all". Additionally, teachers have not yet adapted the English language arts curriculum to the students' needs. When asked for a curriculum map for the language arts program, the school provided the published non-adapted scope and sequence and a vertical standards map by grade level, both from ReadyGEN. Teachers stated, "We thought we should teach the program 'as is' because it is 'scripted' and now we are told we must adjust it and put in higher-order Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions and activities." Furthermore, across grades there is an inconsistency in lesson plans. Of the documents reviewed, a fifth grade lesson on a science fiction anchor text was photocopied directly from the program without adaptation or teacher input based on student performance, struggles, or suitable extensions. Yet, another fifth grade lesson demonstrated use of the same science fiction anchor text based on the photocopied ReadyGEN lesson, but instead demonstrated question adaptations for the students. One fourth grade lesson provided differentiated activities based on students' reading levels, and a second grade special education lesson plan, provided multiple access points with rotating stations for some students while the teacher conferenced with others by testing them on reading. However, not all of the rotations provided rigorous and higher-order skilled activities. Thus, although some lessons reflect planning to provide access for a diversity of learners, an inconsistency across grades and subjects hinders all students from having access to rigorous tasks.
- Strengthen teacher pedagogy to ensure instruction that consistently uses effective questioning, student discussions, and multiple entry points, to elevate thinking and the quality of work products by all learners. (1.2)
 - Classroom visits evidenced questioning that was teacher directed and moved from teacher to student with only one or two students answering, resulting in limited discussion. For example during a fourth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math lesson reviewing triangles, the teacher

quickly asked several questions regarding previously learned facts defining triangle types. As the speed of the questions allowed for only single student answers, the teacher made an attempt at promoting discussion by asking, "Who agrees with him?" However, students did not join in a student-to-student discussion. Instead, the teacher redirected the question to another student. While this teacher used arm motions to remind students about obtuse and acute angles, providing a multiple entry point, and students were asked to make the motion, not all did so, showing uneven participation. In other classes, lessons show varying methods to engage students ranging from questions at DOK levels 1 and 2 to higher-level questions, yet with inconsistent discussion and participation. For example in a first grade class held in the hydroponic garden science room, the teacher reminded students of the life cycle using DOK 1 questions, while they wrote paragraphs and illustrated the cycle. However, in regard to multiple entry points, a student with special needs did use an iPad and with the support of the paraprofessional was able to access the lesson. Yet, during English language arts in a third grade class regarding a story, the teacher asked students, "Why does the boy need to 'see through the darkness'?" When one student correctly answered this higher-level question, the teacher moved on to another question without promoting a discussion or asking other students about their thinking, resulting in uneven participation and discussion. This inconsistency of participation, questioning strategies, student discussion, and implementation of multiple entry points, results in teaching strategies that limit student participation and cognitive engagement.

- Refine the observation practice so that actionable and effective feedback to teachers clearly connects, leading to improved delivery of instruction. (4.1)
 - The school's use of the Danielson Framework for Learning, (FfT) along with its corresponding components of practice sets the standards for expectations, and administrator's ratings and tracking of each component leads to evaluating teachers in all areas. Although the cycles of observations are frequent, the feedback is not sufficiently specific, actionable, or time bound, limiting effective monitoring of teachers implementing recommendations. In three out of 18 observations reviewed, teachers were asked to reference the Fft and the DOK chart. For example, "Please review component three (questioning skills) to see how you can move all areas to effective. Encourage your students to build on each other's responses. Engage your students in conversations to ensure they are learning the material." Additionally, some feedback provided for limited improvement of practice by merely stating, "If students finish at different times, then have book baggies ready, which will allow them to engage in independent reading." Other ADVANCE reports evidenced no feedback, suggestions, or comments. Consequently, teacher's reaction was varied to the feedback. As a new teacher stated, "I get some feedback and suggestions to go to view someone else's class." While other teachers shared, "The feedback needs to be improved. I would like someone to send me to a website for professional development opportunities, or come to my classroom and show me what to do and how to improve." As a result, in the absence of prioritizing needed next steps or providing sufficient support to help staff improve their practice with specific, actionable and prioritized feedback, professional growth of teachers is hindered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Benjamin Franklin	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