

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Max Schoenfeld School

09X070

1691 Weeks Avenue

Bronx

NY 10457

Principal: Kerry Castellano

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Lead Reviewer: Sheila S. Gorski

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Max Schoenfeld School is an elementary school with 1369 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school populations comprise 25% Black, 72% Hispanic, 1% Asian and 3% other students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012-2013 was 90.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school strategically aligns supports to maintain a safe and inclusive culture which permeates the school encouraging adult and student learning to increase student academic and personal growth. (1.4)
 - Analysis of the school survey led to the design of a school goal to increase the measure of trust and support a welcoming school tone conducive to learning. This is exemplified in the school leader's efforts to create environments of respect and rapport, as leveraged by the Danielson Framework, thus this theory of action reinforces the school's intentional decision to implement the *Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)* during the school day to engage students in positive experiences with peers and adults to build their collaboration skills. For example, students are meaningfully challenged in making decisions on self-control and modeling routines, and habits for peers to adopt as their own while also partaking in an activity called, "Gotcha Jams!" During a student meeting those wearing a gotcha badge explained a choice of wearing the badge or placing it on their desks and when a teacher makes note of the badge and observes the student's self-control and increasingly constructive behaviors, points are given to the students. Upon accruing a number of points, students are rewarded in recognition of their achievement during "Gotcha" assemblies. Additionally, the school's aligned professional development, and school-community support on PBIS for the team comprised of significant representation includes the leadership, the guidance counselor, school aides, teachers and parents is strategic to building an effective and well-informed team to lead these efforts, thus ensuring successful implementation. Teachers were trained to use PBIS strategies to improve behavior by engaging students in daily lessons that include positive interactions. Further, teachers were trained to revisit, evaluate, and revise the school wide PBIS matrix annually in support of student needs and school goals to increase school safety, resulting in a positive learning environment. Students also engage in conversations and learning experiences as integral voices in support of their learning. For example, students showcase their abilities to research and present their findings of a grade level author's study to their peers, staff, and parents. Moreover, students self-regulate sustaining positive behaviors and a safe and orderly learning environment. In addition, parents state, "We work under the same umbrella as the school and our mission is to educate our children. There is no, I and you in this school, there is only, we!" In collaboration with the parent coordinator, teachers, and parents team up to make school improvements via presentations of strategically aligned workshops that include the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), English as a second language and special education workshops so that families understand the demands of the CCLS to best support their children. Most recently, parents also purchased books to assist in preparing students for the common core challenges embedded in the State exam. These meaningful, collective efforts continuously support positive learning environments for all students and adults, resulting in school improvements that encourage effective academic and personal behaviors.
- The school's organizational decisions, use of resources and staff time support instructional goals to meet the learning needs of all students and increase academic performance (1.3)

- The school's partnership with Teachers College has propelled the Reading/Writing Project into the school model in English language arts, which supports the school's instructional goal to improve literacy. Hence, the school implements the workshop model in all grades ensuring alignment to CCLS as supported by Teachers College staff developers who train the school's part-time coaches who then build professional capacity in their teacher peers via modeling lessons, intervisitations or individual support. The leadership also supports school goals, student achievement and pedagogical improvement in its commitment to the use of technology within classrooms via means of SMART boards and laptops purchased to engage students in high interest activities such as interactive movements of math tools to visually formulate and express math equations, thus engaging students in meaningful work. The school has also partnered with a Generation Ready educational consultant who coaches teachers on a one-to-one basis supporting individual professional needs. Additionally, this consultant facilitates weekly meetings with the writing and small group reading inquiry teams strategically reviewing units of study, use of resources, and engaging in professional discourse on adapting graphic organizers, and implementing text-based literacy tasks for all students. The leadership also used specific per session allocations to provide opportunities for teachers to work on instructional adjustments, examine student work and identify trends and learning gaps. Subsequently, a grade-level teacher team is working on a long-term action plan, meeting on Wednesdays after school to collaborate on improving student writing. Their inquiry work informs the writing process and provides staff development. Each grade has a writing goal and collaboratively the team identifies possible strategies. This time also affords opportunities to create several writing booklets that include, annotated student writing, and a writing rubric. The team's booklets are used as a writing resource and support for all teachers. As a result of these teacher collaborations learning gaps are identified and improved instruction is reflected in student work on classroom displays.
- The leadership has developed and communicated to the school community a set of goals that focuses on improving pedagogical practice, and increasing student achievement to support student learning and social-emotional growth. (3.1)
 - A needs-assessment and school data analyzed by the School Leadership Team (SLT), administration and teacher teams has generated a set of data-based goals aligned to school needs. The leadership successfully links instructional goals to action plans that include professional development, Teachers College curricular resources such as, mentor texts; in math, *Go Math* curricular resources and for school improvements, the implementation of PBIS and incentivizing activities. Moreover, a component from PBIS is Project LEARN, which stands for, Listen, Excellent Expectations, Aim High, Respect, and No Excuses, an after school program that engages students in enrichment activities and further promotes positive behaviors, social skills encouraging decision-making of personal behaviors. Project LEARN goals embody, citizenship, building a sense of community, promoting positive peer modeling, accountability and responsibility. Regular checkpoints, scheduled periodic benchmarks and weekly team meetings track progress and inform adjustments to increase student learning and promote social-emotional growth.
 - To continue school improvements by strengthening pedagogy, student achievement and school culture, the administration includes six grade level part-time instructional leaders trained by Teachers College who then provide staff development and model best practices in their classrooms that serve as lab sites. Teachers reflect on their professional growth and create goals on their strengths

and needs. Also, the School leadership and faculty communicate with parents through SLT and Parent Association meetings, monthly notifications and the open door policy that ensures organic communication and involvement with the entire school community. For example, best practices adopted from the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Teachers College partnership. Also, collaborative parent workshops and the PBIS initiative ensure families understand the CCLS, instructional shifts in literacy and math and involve families in learning how to support their children and nurture a safe learning environment. Hence, these school initiatives are resulting in collaborative decisions that leverage school improvements.

What the school needs to improve

- Build upon the use of student data to further align academic tasks to curricula to promote rigorous habits, high levels of thinking and deep reasoning in all students. (1.1)
 - The school ensures alignment of curricula embedding instructional shifts with the CCLS aligned *Teachers College Reading/Writing Project*, the school's literacy model. An interdisciplinary approach to the units of study complements the subject areas and is beginning to create a balance of informational and fictional texts so that students are exposed to read alouds and independent reading in a variety of genres. In math, the school has chosen *Go Math and its curriculum*, to support the instructional goal toward closing the math gap. However, academic tasks show an uneven emphasis of rigorous practices aligned to the DOK rubric and of higher-order skills across the subjects, and grades, specifically for relevant subgroups such as English language learners and special education students. In spite of refinements made to the curricula reviewed in curricular binders, the academic tasks and lesson plans did not consistently highlight rigorous habits or probe student thinking. Likewise, planning specified student groups and adjustments proposed to afford multiple points of entry and scaffolds to curricula did not reflect the purposeful use of data to inform revisions that provide relevant subgroups significant access to curricula and to academic tasks to increase deep reasoning. Thus, opportunities for some students to participate in high level academic tasks that develop higher-order thinking skills and meaningful engagement are hindered.
- Further develop coherence in teaching strategies and instructional decision making to provide purposeful entry points so that lessons explicitly challenge thinking to improve student achievement. (1.2)
 - The school's belief that students learn best when engaged in the workshop model with a mini-lesson and collaboratively working in groups reading independent texts and integrating technology is leveraged by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and was observable in some classrooms. Lesson plans include the mini-lesson, graphic organizers, group activities and question prompts. However, in numerous classrooms visited questions were directed to one student with reciprocal response, while in other classrooms teachers engaged students in, turn and talk activities. For example, in one classroom, the teacher gave the students 15 seconds to look at a picture and then turn and describe what they saw in the picture. In another classroom the teacher asked several questions, however the questions were yes/no questions. For instance, one question asked, "Is it realistic fiction?" This question prompted the choral response, "Yes!" While students worked in groups and appeared attentive to the lessons, discussions were inconsistently rigorous, with limited opportunities for students to exhibit higher-

order thinking skills. A review of classroom work folders and literacy notebooks indicated sporadic dates of use by students. In some classrooms there were menus of strategies as options for student use, but this was not seen in the majority of classrooms visited. Lessons were not always challenging, as evidenced in a lack of probing students into higher-order thinking, nor revealed student involvement at high levels, thus limiting some students, including relevant subgroups from investing in learning experiences that challenged them and probed critical thinking to engender standard-based work products.

- Strengthen the use of assessment practices across classrooms so that teachers consistently provide actionable feedback to students and make effective instructional adjustments to meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - The school uses a myriad of assessments to examine English language arts and math. For example, running records and checklists assess literacy and teachers also use quick checks and end of unit assessments to measure student growth of math instruction. Moreover, teachers use a writing baseline and rubric to examine the writing process. Further, student writing tasks are measured by genre specific rubrics. Two computer-based adaptive programs measure reading elements such as, fluency, phonemic awareness and reading comprehension. Some teachers use a computer-based aspect of the school's math program to assess math instruction and assign homework. However, in some classrooms feedback on post-its attached to student work on classroom displays stated comments like, "Great work, great details!". While others stated, 'You have evidence and analysis!' Yet other feedback was a check, a check-plus, or a numerical rating such as, '100%, Excellent or 90%, Very Good!'" Some student work included feedback informing students of what they did well and what they needed to do next and others attached a rubric with highlighted areas on the rubric. Additionally, some student portfolios, work folders, and notebooks showed minimal to no feedback. During a student meeting students expressed that they receive feedback informing them what they need to work on as a class, but they are not always informed of what they individually need to work on, or how to work on their needs. Also, the school grading policy is generally based on reading levels that the inquiry team is currently developing and expects to roll out in the next school year. Varying measures of assessment and inconsistent use of data inhibits reliable and actionable feedback to all students, thus impeding students from taking a vital role in their learning and teachers from having a clear trajectory that leads to effective instructional adjustments and student achievement across the school.
 - Teachers are working on using data to create student groups. In spite of these efforts checking for student understanding in classrooms visited was uneven. For instance, in some classrooms, walking around the classroom to see if students could write a sentence was a check for understanding, or group work with a share-out was another form of checking for understanding. In math, a quick check was used to examine comprehension. In numerous classrooms no checks were used during the lesson, or during group work, while some teachers intermittently asked questions. Lesson plans showed that questions were planned, but not consistently used to check comprehension. Also, students state that they seldom have opportunities to do peer or self-assessments. Even though students show high interest in some lessons, teacher assessment of group work and questioning prompts, that were low-level questions, did not assess individual student understanding, or spark group discussions. Consequently, evidence of assessment practices across classrooms reveal uneven use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment, thus limiting effective instructional adjustments and student contributions to their learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Max Schoenfeld School	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