Quality Review Report

2013-2014

PS 72 Dr. William Dorney

Elementary School X072

2951 Dewey Avenue
Bronx
NY 10465

Principal: Margarita Colon

Dates of review: January 7-8, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Holly Reichert

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 72 Dr. William Dorney is an elementary school with 897 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 20% Black, 70% Hispanic, 5% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 18% 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 91.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school organizes Common Core-aligned curricula into integrated literacy and math blocks to engage students in standards-based tasks aimed at building knowledge and skill mastery across grades and subjects. (1.1)

    - The school's integrated approach to curricula provides standards-based instruction in literacy, including science and social studies, and math as well as in physical education/health, character education, art and music. All subjects incorporate the instructional shifts with particular attention to the school's instructional foci on academic vocabulary, fluency and problem-solving. In an effort to deepen instructional coherence across grades, the school adopted ReadyGEN for literacy and Go Math! For math. The school uses ReadyGEN as a curricular resource in the literacy block, with select units integrated into existing curriculum maps. Furthermore, each literacy unit is divided into two modules with performance based assessments linked to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) text types. With a focus on explanation, use of evidence to substantiate reasoning and content specific vocabulary across grades, the curricula connects to college and career readiness skills. One parent commented that her sons are engaged in the same skills she is using as a college student including reading research studies and writing papers, stating, "PS 72 empowers my boys and provides college readiness. The things I'm doing in college I see my sons doing." Students with disabilities and English language learners engage in the same curricula as their general education peers. Access and extensions are provided to individual and groups of students based on need determined by assessment data, and curricular tasks are tiered for instructional groupings. Text-based questions ask students to respond orally and in writing, while differentiated structures and levels of questions based on Depth of Knowledge provide scaffolding. Teacher teams ensure curricula is planned and revised for individual and groups of students based on the analysis of work products and assessment data. As a result of team findings regarding time spent on content learning in correlation to student outcomes, the school revamped its integrated literacy block scheduling in October 2013 to include weekly content days dedicated to science and social studies curricula.

- The school's inclusive culture is rooted in specific academic and social-emotional instruction coupled with guidance and youth development support aimed at diverse needs and focused on college/career readiness. (1.4)

    - Celebrating strengths and promoting positive actions connect to the school's approach to an inclusive culture for learning. Based on Positive Behavior Intervention Systems and the character education program, the school involves students in acknowledging strengths and areas for growth in themselves and others as a path to collective improvement. This is done in the classroom through self and peer reflection on learning and behavior. Furthermore, the school's new theme, The Bridge to Success, links the pillars of being safe, responsible and respectful with academic behaviors to the visible metaphor of moving to college and career

readiness. Students interviewed stated that respect starts in the classroom. One student shared, “In class we work in groups, discuss math problems and share the strategies we used.” Another added, “We see each other’s train of thought and respect each other’s answers whether it is the same answer or not.” Students who had been disruptive in the lunch room proposed a positive way to use detention time by helping younger students in math and reading. This suggestion led to the Helping Buddies Committee. Students in this program went from multiple reported behavior incidents last year to one or none this year. The program is so popular students now have to apply for the privilege to support their younger peers. Furthermore, the school’s active student council is dedicated to service and student activities. After school clubs is a recent addition as a result of student council. Parents interviewed stated that the positive culture and opportunities for children to contribute to the school has led to a positive change in their children. One parent shared, “Academic and social-emotional support is provided by the teachers and my child is now involved in everything.” Another parent said that his son was very quiet when they came to the school, and “now can’t stop my child from talking.” He attributed this change to the way his child is encouraged to contribute. The school dedicates staff and time to support all children with guidance/advisement, interventions and youth development opportunities. The school attributes increased attendance among chronically absent students to the coordinated efforts of designated staff and guidance counselors. Individualized and classroom support is anchored in personal and academic behaviors, such as persistence. One student council member said, “I have really gotten better, I chose the right path and I am proud of myself.” Another added, I am happy for doing the right thing, I made it.” The principal shared that a few of the student council members were struggling students who were encouraged and supported to run for office by teachers and the guidance counselors. These students are now leaders in the school and continue to improve academically and exhibit strong social-emotional growth.

- Teachers’ common assessment practices promote ongoing student work/data analysis to adjust curricula and instruction to better address identified learning gaps and increase student achievement. (2.2)

    - Teachers’ use common assessments practices to track student learning over time as well as during daily lessons. Common rubrics are used in literacy and math for CCLS-aligned writing tasks and performance-based assessments (PBA) at the culmination of each unit module. These rubrics provide teachers and students with a common language with which to talk about learning, areas of strength and areas for growth in response to a writing or math task. Students receive feedback, on what they did well and on what they can improve, aligned to the language of the content specific rubrics. Students also self and peer assess using the same rubrics. Data from the baseline and the PBAs at the end of the first unit in literacy show growth across classes. Growth is also evident comparing the first and second culminating writing tasks with most students increasing a level on the rubric. Teachers attribute this growth to the adjustments they made to instruction in response to baseline and ongoing formative assessment data. This data provides the school with trends and patterns that they are addressing in the vertical grade team to make adjustments to the school’s curricula to better meet all student needs from kindergarten through grade 5. Currently, teams are looking at

grade and school trends to adjust to unit 2 curricula in literacy and math. Conjointly, teachers use daily checks for understanding to support learning in the classroom during each integrated block. In classes observed, teachers used a variety of assessment practices including questioning, conferencing, individual and group understanding cards and exit slips. Evidenced by lesson plans and assessment data reviewed, teachers group students for tiered tasks aligned to student proficiency on the previous day's assessments coupled with baseline and summative assessment data to date. In some classes, teachers readjusted groupings following the mini-lesson. Students, engaged in an enrichment activity, explained that they were grouped as a result of their understanding and performance on the task. This group used the understanding cards to communicate with their teacher who was working with a small group. When the group got stuck they raised a red card and the teacher came over to work with them. Students interviewed also spoke about how self and peer assessment is used in literacy and math. Students assess themselves with the rubric prior to the teacher providing feedback. Students then set goals based on their assessment and the teacher's feedback. Furthermore, students explained their progress over time, showing completed work in their integrated literacy and math block folders and their resulting goals for both subject areas.

- Teacher teams analyze student work and data to adjust planning and instruction that addresses student learning gaps and tracks standards-based skills mastery across grades and subjects. (4.2)

    - Teachers work together in grade teams two to three times per week to collaboratively analyze student work and revise instructional planning. In addition, grade team leaders meet weekly as the school's vertical grade team with the purpose of deepening curricular coherence, bridging instruction and assessment across grade levels. Furthermore, the school is piloting grade team pairings to better understand the needs of students in light of Common Core-aligned instruction. The 4th and 5th grade teams paired up this year with the specific focus of middle school readiness. All teams utilize the school's protocol for looking at student work which highlights what students can and almost/cannot do aligned to content specific rubric criteria. Each teacher completes this protocol for her students, then teams determine trends across the grade and pinpoint areas for instructional adjustment. Following instructional adjustments, teams share selected student work to determine further instructional supports. During a grade team observed, samples of student work from the baseline and the interim performance task showed growth in the highlighted area of problem solving and explaining mathematical reasoning in writing. During this meeting, the team also decided to revise the rubric and protocol to include math practices. Grade teams make decisions that affect instruction school-wide as well as work done by teams. Based on student work data, teams aligned the school's looking-at-student-work protocol to the common rubrics in literacy and math. Teachers shared that their practice has improved as a result of working with their colleagues. One teacher highlighted her shift in using graphic organizers more explicitly to support writing, leading to an increase in student performance from the first writing task to the second. Distributed leadership is evident in teams as members rotate roles of facilitator, chart recorder, note taker and presenter. The school's literacy and math coaches attend team meetings, provide support and resources, and liaise

between grade and vertical teams and school leadership to ensure coherence and continuity.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen pedagogical practices focused on differentiating learning tasks and promoting student-centered discussion so that all learners are cognitively engaged and demonstrate their thinking orally and in writing. (1.2)

    - School-wide routines support an inclusive culture of learning that promotes risk taking, productive struggle and perseverance in challenging tasks. During small group activities, students spoke to one another in respectful and supportive ways displaying facility with accountable talk stems and appropriate turn taking. In some classes, students worked in groupings aligned to their proficiency and areas of need, while in another, triads provided English language learners with models of spoken language coupled with bilingual peer support. Manipulative supports, task sheets, reference charts and flip cards in a number of classrooms provided students with visual and tactile support that allowed them to take responsibility for learning and complete tasks with peers and independently. While it is evident from classrooms observed and lesson plans reviewed that teachers plan for diverse learners, provide scaffolds, and differentiate questioning and tasks, not all student needs were met and not all students participated or understood the task they were asked to do. Student work reviewed showed a range of responses and thinking was not evident in tasks that did not ask for explanation or an extended response. In one class, some student responses and work showed misunderstanding between what the teacher intended and what students understood the task to be. In another class, some students completed the task and waited patiently for others to finish. Additionally, some of the tiered tasks observed did not challenge students at the higher levels of proficiency. These students demonstrated they could complete the task easily. During end of lesson summary shares observed, only a small number of students participated by raising their hands and answering the questions asked. While planning and practices for diverse learners are in place across the school, opportunities for meeting all student learning needs and engaging all learners in sharing their thinking and critiquing the thinking of peers are missed.

- Expand observation practices by aligning feedback to teacher goals and having regular, structured cycles of peer visitations to accelerate teacher growth and deepen common practices across the school. (4.1)

    - School leaders have a systematic approach to support teacher growth. The administration starts the year with a professional learning interest survey and teachers establish professional goals. Classroom observation feedback is aligned to the Danielson Framework and teachers receive written and oral feedback that highlights strengths and next steps for improving practice in high-leverage areas such as classroom management, student engagement and assessing student learning. Feedback specifies how to move from one level of performance to the next on the Danielson rubric. Teachers reflect on implementing these recommendations and how they plan to deepen their practice. One teacher shared that the feedback she received on adding task cards to

work done in centers led to a positive shift in her practice. The teacher now provides written reference information to support and guide students. As a result, students refer to the information provided, rarely asking for further clarification or help. The administration also conducts classroom environment walk through and collects student work and teacher conferencing notes to evaluate the effectiveness of common practices aligned to school expectations and goals. Professional development aligns to school-wide needs as determined by observation data and aligns with school goals. School leaders track observation data, levels of performance, and interest areas for ongoing professional development. Additionally, the school has an articulated support structure for new and struggling teachers focused on individual coaching and intervisitation. While the school has a defined system in place to support teacher growth, feedback is not specifically linked to teacher goals, tracking of data does not show groupings for differentiated support as well as training for teachers at all levels of performance, and intervisitation is not used as a vehicle for ongoing learning with peers to norm effective practice with the use of the Danielson Framework school-wide. As a result, the school's capacity to accelerate teacher growth is limited.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name:	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