

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Senator Abraham Bernstein School

Elementary School 105

725 Brady Avenue

Bronx

NY 10462

Principal: Christopher Eustace

Dates of Review: October 23 - 24, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.- Gorski

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Senator Abraham Bernstein is an elementary school with 1,443 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 14% Black, 63% Hispanic, 13% White, 8% Asian students, and 2% other students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Throughout the school a positive tone encourages a safe and orderly learning environment for students, adults, and bridges school communities resulting in student academic and personal improvement. (1.4)
 - Across classrooms teachers and students share a personalized class tone collaboratively designed to provide clear expectations and build a culture of respect. Students spoke of their school motto, “Be safe, be smart, and be prepared for tomorrow”, as what they believe and see daily throughout their school. Students shared their belief on how they are being prepared for tomorrow through their teachers who serve as, “role models” and the content knowledge they are learning. Specifically, math is a subject students appreciate learning, especially because when they are assessed teachers will provide more instruction in an area of challenge and then are provided the opportunity to do that part over and check for their understanding, thereby ensuring that students do not miss acquisition of essential math concepts. Additionally, the school affords opportunities for students to assist in setting the tone of the school through a student government body. The criteria for selection of a student government member requires students to write a speech about their character, ensure all classroom tasks and homework are always completed, wear the school uniform daily, and avoid being sent to detention. One student explained the student government’s participation in a plant sale, their next step to voice their ideas around student events, and to assist in selection of the senior trip for the exiting fifth grade, supports the members being viewed as role models for their peers and as participants in discussions that leverage school practices and events.
 - Students participate in a weekly grade level advisory period where instruction around academic and personal behaviors encourages social-emotional growth. Some examples of monthly advisory topics are planned to include Conflict Resolution, Cliques and Gossip, Bullying, and Understanding Self in a Diverse Community. Numerous assemblies are strategically planned throughout the year to include the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Police Benevolent Association so that all students participate in programs centered on discussions and scenarios regarding social-emotional topics. Moreover, the guidance department promotes the importance of school attendance via a 100% attendance assembly throughout the school year for all students, and ensures that students are known by multiple staff members reassuring student safety, happiness at school, and increasing student understanding of personal behaviors and academic improvement as evidenced by 95.1% attendance thus far this year.(b)
- Leadership ensures key staff and teacher teams are systematized to support school goals, thus improving instructional areas of focus and engaging students in thought-provoking meaningful work. (1.3)

- The school 's priority goal centers around the instructional core, specifically, the improvement of pedagogical practices to accelerate student achievement through resources that include six instructional coaches, three to support English language arts and three to support math practices. Teacher teams are composed of about 15 teachers per grade, therefore to ensure that teams are able to effectively and collaboratively engage in their professional responsibilities the teams were divided into smaller teams where the work is manageable and focused. Additionally, the entire team gathers once after every three to four common planning meetings to share the work and to ensure alignment to instructional goals. Coaches are responsible for supporting the teacher teams and assuring that the teams are involved in using student work and data to make instructional adjustments that lead to engaging students in higher-order thinking. Furthermore, a needs assessment on pedagogical inquiries led the leadership to design a Teacher Support Academy and offer per session monies to teachers who would take on the task of providing peer support for all teachers. Teachers are afforded the opportunity to voluntarily attend the Teacher Support Academy to engage in advance training and deep conversations around pedagogical needs in support of instructional practices that ultimately reflect in student improvement. Moreover, as a pilot school for the Phase1 Special Education Initiative, deliberate decisions around flexible programming and increasing the number of Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) classrooms were made to include four part-time ICT classes. The use of thoughtful and organized structures with student success in the forefront provides teachers with resources and time needed to ensure enhanced instruction, thus improving student achievement. Moreover, the leadership and faculty collaboratively used a school-based option (SBO) to provide extra time and afford teacher teams a ninth period on designated Thursdays specifically for inquiry work around the examination of student work. Teacher teams meet two more days per week to continue to attend to the goal of using student data to make instructional adjustments that deepen student thinking as evidenced in academic tasks enveloped in student work folders.
- Across classrooms and grades, teachers regularly use common assessments to check student understanding, and student self-assessment, thus informing instructional adjustments to meet student needs. 2.2
 - Teachers begin the school year with curricula aligned pre-assessments in every grade, and use student data results to ensure that appropriate instructional adjustments guide their instructional decisions. Fountas and Pinnell running records are used to inform the trajectory of the school and design the classroom library. Other common assessments are particular to assessing end-of-math units, literacy skills, and school-wide assessments aligned to specific standards identified via a gap analysis. The school also utilizes periodic assessments such as the measures of student learning (MOSL) to sustain the learning expectations. Furthermore, teachers also use shared assessments to measure content areas that are embedded in the school's thematic units of study and use the results to monitor student improvement. For example, teacher teams use a protocol for evaluating student work that is aligned to the fourth grade Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) of focus in Literacy depicted as, writing informative/explanatory texts and

developing the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations and other areas related to the topic. The protocol then requires teachers to describe the student work, what they see, student responses; interpret the student work, from the student's perspective and what the student is working on. Next, teachers cite the implications for the classroom practices answering the question, "What are the implications of this work for teaching and assessment?" The last aspect of the protocol grounds teachers in reflection and captures questions and wonderings. The teams have decided that their next steps for the group are to bring this work to an instructional and curricular adjustment. This cyclical protocol drives ongoing checks across classrooms with student-to-student, and students and teachers sharing instructional reflections that provide reciprocal effective feedback as evidenced on posted work on classroom bulletin boards and that which is included in student work folders.

- Teacher teams work in professional collaborations to promote instructional goals aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and analyze student data, resulting in increased teacher capacity and student progress. (4.2)
 - Teachers across grades work together in the analysis of student work driven from common core aligned performance tasks in a current unit of study. Using a protocol for evaluating student work, teachers engage in a standard process used by all grades and content area teachers to sustain coherence in all teamwork, thus cultivating improved teacher practice and reliable student outcomes. The protocol also delineates the standards of focus and instructional shifts, which for example, require students to use precise language and domain specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. Teams regularly engage in focused analysis of student work and share ideas and strategies to be employed and monitored at the classroom level. For example, in anticipation of the upcoming unit of study on non-fiction, teacher teams used the protocol to analyze the writing baseline on a non-fiction text, entitled, *Stink Bugs*. Analysis indicated that there was evidence of paragraph formation, and there was an attempt to answer the prompt. Student work also included a topic sentence and some supporting details, but needs more complex sentence structures, student voice, and deeper comprehension. The teams' purposeful decision-making as to their next steps is to engage in sharing best practices, and attend to the student outcomes to make instructional adjustments, thus improving student achievement and building teacher ability.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the emphasis on refining the schools' curricula and academic tasks so lessons provide suitable access for all students strengthening the level of student engagement and deepening student reasoning. (1.1)
 - The school has engaged in the enhancement of its current common core aligned thematic units of study and through the implementation of Ready-Gen components such as the guided reading aspect which is based on student discussion. In addition, teachers have updated all units to include science and social studies as a springboard to learning. These efforts are beginning to demonstrate consistency in the planning

of tasks that probe students into deeper thinking via interest levels. The school is also infusing elements of Understanding by Design (UBD) to attend to the student needs. However, a review of the units of study and unit refinements of academic tasks along with lesson plans indicate that the school has not yet consistently embedded instructional considerations for its relevant subgroups that provide multiple points of access and scaffolds and afford all students effective access to the curricula and comprehensible input across the content areas. When speaking to students it was evident that only some students understood the purpose of group assignments and the expectations for choosing the appropriate concepts for application of the focus skill. Units of study show efforts of scaffolds, but lack an explicit variety of representations, models, and menus of choice, to purposely allow for access to curricula or extend the learning, thus limiting some students from receptive learning acquisition, and engaging a variety of learners in deep reasoning.

- Cultivate a set of beliefs across classrooms informed by the Danielson Framework to emulate how students learn best and provide learning scaffolds and multiple entry points to engage all students in meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - Leadership and faculty have identified instructional priorities leveraged by the Danielson Framework for teaching to inform clear expectations and initiate a collective set of beliefs about how students learn best. A distinct common core aligned learning objective is encouraged across classrooms coupled with academic tasks and activities that are aligned to the objectives and are assessed via task-specific rubrics. Leadership acknowledges that establishing a culture for learning and implementation of the prioritized Danielson components are at different levels across classrooms. Teachers are expected to focus on questioning and discussion techniques embedding questions for multiple levels of thinking to prompt students into interpretive and critical thinking. However, classroom visitations revealed varying degrees of effective instructional approaches and questioning. Presently across the grades, teachers are focusing on a unit that centers on a thematic approach to the study of animals, yet across classrooms tasks inconsistently challenge students, and student engagement in lessons is uneven. For example, in one classroom students working in groups were required to complete tasks distinguished by ability levels while the teacher was supporting a small group. Speaking to a group of five students, one student explained that their task was to look at illustrations, each different from one another, analyze it, make inferences regarding the illustrations, and write a summary about it. This task entailed pictorial analysis and perceptual use of ideas in order for students to be able to take symbolic representations and make meaning of them. Students were able to articulate their task and the approach they took to complete the task. This kind of rigorous instruction was observed in some classrooms, but in many more classrooms students grappled with what was required of them and questions were basically low-level questions with minimal discussion, thus limiting opportunities for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities from engaging in deeper thinking and making relevant contributions to class discussions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Senator Abraham Bernstein 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