

Quality Review Report

2013-2014

P.S. X176

K-12 all grades 75X176

**850 BAYCHESTER AVENUE
BRONX
NY, 10475**

Principal: RIMA RITHOLTZ

**Dates of review: May 28, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Barbara Joseph**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. X176 is a K-12 all grades school with 779 students from PK through grade SE. The school population comprises 40.9% Black, 42.5% Hispanic, 6.2% White, and 2.3% Asian students. The student body includes 8.0% English language learners and 96.1% special education students. Boys account for 83.3% of the students enrolled and girls account for 16.7%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Curricula, academic and functional tasks are planned and modified to provide rigorous and coherent instruction across content areas that are CCLS aligned to accelerate outcomes for student groups along a range of learning and cognitive abilities. (1.1)
 - The school has strategically selected a variety of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula, programs and resources that are fully implemented across sites and service categories to meet the needs of individual and groups of students on the autistic spectrum with a wide range of cognitive abilities to provide access to learning and skill acquisition as identified on each student's individual educational plan (IEP). Math in Focus, Go Math and Ready Gen provide the foundational core for literacy and math for the elementary and middle grades. The Unique Curriculum, enhanced by district generated modules for all subjects and aligned to the Career, Development and Occupational Standards (CDOS) for students in alternate assessment, drive vocational planning across secondary classrooms and work study sites. Attention to the integration of the CCLS and the instructional shifts are included within curriculum maps for all core subject areas for all students. The curriculum consistently provides learners, at all levels, with opportunities to engage in learning experiences that support the generalization of skills to other content areas and then to vocational pursuits. For example, high school learners working at a local seafood restaurant are learning vocabulary related to their respective jobs and responsibilities. Additional curricular resources are selected based on formative assessments to identify present levels of performance leading to IEP learning goals and targeted instructional decisions. Students with autism require a variety of additional curricula and instructional planning to move them along a hierarchy of development to support skill acquisition and their generalization across environments and optimal higher order thinking skills at each level of development for early learners, intermediate learners and advanced learners. Foundations, Structured Methods in Language Education (SMILE), Edmark, Reading for Concepts and Eden are utilized across all grades to provide developmentally appropriate language/literacy skills for identified student groups. Student work and data is consistently analyzed by administrators and teachers so that planning of tasks are adjusted and the use of specialized supports and strategies can be determined. For example, teachers track the progress of their students' decoding skills and have identified a subgroup of students who are not making adequate gains using the Edmark program. SMILE, a program developed for non-readers, is being implemented to support targeted students. During regular and structured meeting times, medial data is reported, and teachers share specific instructional strategies, including engaging games they have developed to reinforce letter-sound recognition. This behavior of looking at student work and information to make refinements to academic tasks can be seen across individual classrooms, in teacher teams, in planning cohorts and at the instructional cabinet level. This ensures that students have access to rigorous tasks and cements high levels of engagement. The well-orchestrated use of curricula and supplemental resources is leading to increased levels of reading achievement for all student groups. At the time of this review, there was an overall 71% gain in Fountas and Pinnell reading achievement data and an overall 21% increase in reading as reported in the FAST formative assessment the school uses as a Measure for Student Learning (MOSL).

- A coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, informs strategic practices and scaffolds, resulting in high levels of student engagement and the production of meaningful student work. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best when all constituents work together taking on an inquiry stance to engage every student in meaningful learning experiences. A range of assessments inform instruction, learning tasks are presented with multiple entry points, and ongoing monitoring of student performance takes place coherently in classrooms to ensure that every student makes consistent gains and appropriate remediation resources and strategies are used to accelerate that progress. For example, assessment and observational data identified that students were having trouble answering higher order questions in many classrooms. Since over 90% of the student population is on the autism spectrum and has communication deficits as part of their disability, the administration and student support staff collaborated to research a strategy that could explicitly address receptive and expressive language. The Fitzgerald Key, which uses a color-coding system for nouns, actions and objects and encourages the student to write and read in a grammatical format to aid in processing and comprehension, was implemented with a targeted group of students. As a result of the impact on language, literacy and communication gains for this small subgroup, the decision was made to use the strategy school-wide across grades, subjects and service categories. Supported by professional development and the one-to-one support of the lead teachers in components of the Danielson's Framework and with a focus on the need for high-level visual supports such as the Fitzgerald Key, staff routinely utilize and embed extensions into planning and instruction that result in high levels of engagement around appropriately challenging tasks. Additional specialized supports that provide access to learning include but are not limited to assistive technology, graphic organizers, picture schedules, voice output devices and iPads. Classroom visits confirm the embedded use of these high-quality supports, particularly the Fitzgerald Key, in order to support student thinking. The impact is that all students, regardless of their cognitive ability level, are highly engaged in learning tasks and have frequent opportunities to demonstrate their thinking and learning as evident in student discussions and written work products in portfolios and bulletin boards.

- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions aligned with the school's instructional goals to assure high quality instruction leads to progress for all students. (1.3)
 - The principal articulates a clear philosophy about how to ensure the school and its 6 sites cohesively meets the school's instructional goals for students. Noteworthy is how the school is effective in the management of resources such as time, people and budget to support school goals as well as its instructional focus in English language arts. The school has been working with an Aussie consultant for three years who has trained teachers in balanced literacy and how an analysis of student work informs small group instruction. The hiring of four certified music teachers ensure that every student in the school has access to the performing arts based on the school's belief that the Arts offer an interdisciplinary approach in the reinforcement of language, communication and literacy skill development, as well as support students' social/emotional learning and self-esteem. Teacher aptitude is part of a larger succession plan that is meeting the school's short-term instructional goals by supporting teacher development. A lead teacher assignment has been created that reinforces curricular and pedagogical expectations through a structure of direct, frequent and immediate one-on-one support to staff consistently across sites. The principal and data analyst, an additional staff member the budget supports,

reviews a variety of student data points organized in summary sheets on a weekly basis. That initial analysis set against the school's long-range goals establishes the focus for weekly instructional cabinet meetings with assistant principals and then with their coaching team of between one and three lead teachers. Key targets from these documented meetings then inform the lead teachers' assignment for the week as well as the agenda for site-based staff meetings ensuring a common language and messaging of short-term goals. All templates, tools, and handbooks created by the school are housed as resources in binders to support coaching activities. Interactions are logged and followed up by assistant principals who also meet "knee-to-knee" with the teachers they supervise on a periodic basis. Intermediate supervisors report back to the principal weekly. Additionally, the school has scheduled time for teachers to meet at least twice a week, once as part of an inquiry team and other times for collaborative planning. The feedback loop provided by this twenty-person curriculum support team, in conjunction with ongoing data collection and analysis, provides an alignment between the school's goals, instructional focus, and the expectations for teachers' classroom practice to support them that is closing the achievement gap. As a result, students are cognitively engaged in challenging work across content areas respective of their intellectual ability.

- School leaders and staff maintain a supportive culture for learning that communicates high expectations for achievement of staff and students with a vision toward shared responsibility with families for the continuing progress of all constituents. (3.4)
 - The school's mantra, "Keep it Real", focuses all stakeholders on clear and high expectations to promote teaching and learning that brings standards-driven curricula and intervention supports to life in rigorous and meaningful ways for all students, respectively across a range of cognitive abilities. The school is purposeful in its planning, instruction, specific supports and explicit feedback to teachers aligned to Danielson's Framework, directing the actions and decisions made for the benefit of students first and foremost. Administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers and families work closely together to ensure students consistently have access to high quality, meaningful learning as well as receiving the targeted sensory, social/emotional and physical supports that necessitate high levels of attention and engagement by students. The school is systematic in providing specialized supports ensuring that all students are on a track of steady progress. In addition to the school website, newsletters, and routine notifications specific to events and time sensitive topics, the school is in constant communication with families through communication notebooks and phone calling. Teachers, related service providers, the parent coordinator, family worker and other pupil support staff are in constant communication with families, collaborating to support student success. For example, one Pre-K teacher's medial analysis of academic and attendance data for a student, along with low-inference observations led to the standard practice of communication and outreach to the family via the communication notebook and phone calls. When this was met with resistance, school leaders quickly mobilized the student support team who began making regular home visits to support the family and child. Most recently, the student's attendance has increased fostering his ability to make steady academic gains in school. In fact the school maintains a 92% school wide attendance rate, an increase from the school's 84% average before this principal's tenure. Parents unanimously report their high regard for the school leadership and staff who maintain an open door policy and are responsive. "Collaboration is key," states the principal who believes families should feel as though they are on the same team as the staff, working together to promote their children's progress. When asked how to improve the school, one parent voiced, "By keeping my child after age 21." Parents speak about hearing about the school from other parents and "fighting with CSE" to get their child a seat in the school which now houses one hundred fifteen classes across sites. The school works closely with parents,

particularly through their parent coordinator and an eighteen member School Leadership Team to work hand-in-hand with families in meeting their needs and those of their children. A number of parent organizations, many started by the parents themselves such as Fathers' Group and a sibling support group (SIB), to address the needs of siblings who have a sibling with autism with a curriculum by Association of Handicapped and Retarded Children (AHRC), are run by the psychologist and bilingual speech pathologist and offer parents the networking they say is much needed for families who have children with disabilities. Monthly PTA meetings, offered both during the day and at night, offer a wealth of trainings on topics garnered from parent surveys and also include many topics aligned to the school's instruction focus and practices such as SMART goals, the SANDI/FAST assessments and how they inform IEP goals, and the Fitzgerald Key language strategy that the entire staff utilizes across subject areas, to name a few. *Just Because* celebrations provide a forum for students to perform, which keep parents feeling good about the school, but more importantly about their children and the things they "can" do. As a result, parents feel extremely supported by the school and state the real value of the various support groups and trainings is in helping them learn how to assist their children to generalize skills from the school setting to other environments. As a result, there is a continuous movement of students to less restrictive environments (LRE), as evidenced by an average of 10% movement to LRE over the last three years. The school was recently recognized by the Chancellor's team and selected to be a host Learning Partner School to serve as a model for its work around parent engagement. and creating a highly effective culture for learning.

- The school articulates clear expectations for teacher practice through ongoing effective feedback and support to promote teachers' professional growth, leading to improved student work products. (4.1)
 - School leaders conduct formal and informal observations in addition to frequent classroom walkthroughs in order to elevate instructional practice and develop a common language by teachers across the multi-sited organization, currently using Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT) and the Professional Teaching Standards for prior years. Since the school serves a population of students, 96% of whom participate in alternate assessment, the school has developed a Best Practices Document connected to the FFT to extend and more meaningfully inform performance indicators for each competency as they apply to the various unique classroom ratios. Based on trends, there is an identified focus on effective assessment practice as it informs classroom decision-making as well as appropriate questioning and discussion techniques based on Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK). For example, non-verbal students utilize iPads to engage in discussions and peer-to-peer interactions. Classroom observation data, plus teacher self-reflection result in targeted professional goals for staff. This strategic plan has led to system-wide professional development utilizing a multi-tiered structure that relies heavily on the one-to-one support of the Curriculum Coach structure with site-based teams of each of the seven assistant principals and several lead teachers who coach teachers based on observational data reported and specific feedback provided by administration. This classroom-based structure further supports the professional development of paraprofessionals resulting in a cohesive teaching team that is evidenced across classrooms and across sites. Focused inter-visitations, cohort team meetings and a buddy teacher format complement this. External resources for professional development are provided by a consultant, who has been contracted by the school for three years, as well as by attendance to district workshops. Teachers complete a conference form to state how they are using the knowledge and skills learned at workshops they attend outside the school. This further informs the professional development thread to build organizational capacity around identified instructional practices. For example, a teacher who serves students on the autism spectrum, and who has been rated ineffective with extended probation, has been

receiving Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) training from staff within the organization previously trained which has resulted in a developing rating in related competency targets for that teacher. Additionally, administrators consistently review student data and work products as well as data connected to IEP goal mastery to correlate teacher practice to student performance. An interactive electronic platform using Google docs provides immediate feedback as well as the opportunity for a documented communication exchange allowing teachers to take ownership of their learning as well as monitor personal performance and progress in meeting professional goals. Monthly feedback by the site-based curriculum coach teams to the principal on areas of developing or ineffective performance lead to immediate, targeted follow up by teams. School leaders can articulate specific knowledge of the teachers they support and can speak to the incremental achievement gains of students in each classroom they supervise. Teachers, particularly those new to the profession, overwhelmingly speak of the tremendous support they receive by administrators and peers alike, as reflected in the school's Learning Environment Survey. As one second-year teacher stated when speaking about her first year of teaching, "I never felt alone." As a result, teachers have an understanding of their strengths, growth and identified areas of need in order to improve student outcomes as evidenced in teacher observations, written feedback and discussions at teacher team meetings.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the development of assessment tools so that information gathered creates a clear picture of student progress to adjust instructional decisions for students across all areas at both the classroom and team levels. (2.2)
 - Administrators, teachers and related service providers collect and use a variety of summative and formative assessments cohesively across the organization that is aligned to the curriculum. These include but are not limited to the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) and its complement Formative Assessment of Standards Task (FAST), Ed Performance, New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA), and pre- and post-assessments. In addition, Fountas and Pinnell, and Applied Behavior in Language Learning Skills (ABLSS) for identified student groups are used to determine skill and prerequisite skill gaps for intervention. Across classrooms and work-study programs, pupil outcome performance binders (POP) organize data as well as ongoing checks for understanding to inform mastery of IEP goals for individual students. Classroom teachers also develop and use rubrics that examine student accuracy and independence for content area instruction. However, although the school's rubric grading policies are aligned with the curricula and chosen standards, across the vast majority of classrooms rubrics are not explicit enough in providing a clear picture of the degree to which students have mastered content area learning goals. For example, for similar groups of students in 6:1:1, 8:1:1 and 12:1:1 rubric criteria include a 1 to 4 measure of student progress but there is a lack of consensus across classrooms on what each quantitative measure means in terms of student progress in relation to students' IEP goals embedded in age appropriate content lessons. This prevents consistent trend analysis for student subgroups by teachers and teacher teams, in order to maximize learning for students who are early learners, intermediate learners and advanced learners across content areas. In addition, while teachers use assessment data to make effective adjustments to instruction, actionable feedback is not consistent across classrooms. As a result, there are limited opportunities for students, as appropriate, to articulate their progress in skill specific instructional goals which limits their consistent ownership of progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: P.S. X176	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