

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

PS 536

Elementary School 536

**1827 ARCHER STREET
BRONX
NY, 10460**

Principal: SASHA MEDINA

**Dates of review: Feb 3 - 4, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Myrna Rodriguez**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 536 is an elementary school with 351 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 20% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4.% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The leadership and faculty ensure that curricula are integrated with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and promote college and career readiness for diverse learners, resulting in closing the achievement gap (1.1)
 - Across grades and all subjects, including the Arts, the school analyzes student data to develop core curriculum tasks so that individual and groups of students are cognitively engaged as evidenced in their written and oral responses and group work. The school purposefully infuses English language learner (ELL) and Students with Disabilities (SWD) teaching strategies within the curricula, such as emphasizing academic vocabulary in writing and speaking, using texts that engage diverse learners within all lessons, and sets expectations that all student will learn the same curricula. For example, in SWD classes the curricula includes scaffolding techniques using leveled texts, differentiated tasks, and lengthened time on task. The Art standards from the Blueprint for Arts are used to ensure that student projects achieve high standards of rigor. Additionally, the school ensures that the curricula includes an interdisciplinary approach to learning, such as the science teachers integrating literacy, art, and math standards, when developing curriculum, tasks, and assessments. As a result of the school's ensuring that curricula are aligned to CCLS and content standards, students including Ells and SWDs produce high levels of work which can be seen in the high caliber of writing and work products that promote college and career readiness.
- Across classrooms and content areas teachers make effective use of strategies that support a variety of learners and have a set of beliefs about how students learn best, which yields quality student work. (1.2)
 - The school's set of beliefs about how students learn best are grounded in the Danielson Framework for Teaching and are evident across classrooms in the form of various strategies used, including the workshop model, high order questions, the use of multiple entry points to engage all learners, and student discussions, which result in improved student outcomes as evidenced in the school's data and student work products. For example, students are reading for longer periods of time, alternating between fiction and non-fiction texts every day, and then reflect on the readings in various ways, including Arts. Teachers track student progress in reading and vocabulary acquisition using Fountas and Pinnell, a reading tracker and assessment program, and teachers' foci on student learning is resulting in a significant increase in reading levels as compared to prior years.
 - Teachers believe that students learn best when they engage in accountable talk with peers. Thus, the school has developed teacher pedagogy in this area so that across classrooms it is evident that students have been trained in using Socratic stem sentence starters to elicit high levels of conversations among students. For example, in a fourth grade, students in groups of two or three used the following words to critique a peer's statement, "Where in the text did you get that idea?", "I agree with you and I can show you the evidence on this page." Teachers use Depth of Knowledge questions such as "explain your thought process and use the content vocabulary." As a result of teacher

pedagogy, students are taught to respond with specific content information, which produces high levels of student thought and work products.

- The school has structures in place that ensure that a culture of mutual respect, trust, and positive attitudes conducive to student and adult learning, supports student learning needs. (1.4)
 - The leadership and faculty have a theory of action about safety, tone, and climate, which starts with a vision of what a scholar needs to start the learning day. All students participate in Ti Chi exercises in the morning so that they are mentally and physically alert. Student voice is important and students help to make decisions regarding the Friday enrichment activities, school store, and awards for obtaining "peace bucks" for being caught doing great things, such as helping a peer. Structures are in place so that students have opportunities to choose groups that they will work with in classes, as well have choices in choosing tasks when appropriate, which raises the level of respect for student needs and decisions. Every student is known by the principal, staff, and more deeply by at least one teacher. Additionally, the principal meets weekly with sets of parents to discuss items of parental interest including the Core Curriculum, family activities, and a college visit program. As a consequence of the vision and strategic structures set up to engage students an environment of mutual trust and positive attitudes permeates the whole school, resulting in academic and personal growth of students and adults.
- The leadership and staff have a clear vision of school improvement that includes focused school level goals and action plans informed by data analysis that results in better teacher practice and improved student work. (3.1)
 - The principal effectively involves the community in academic and social activities, and students, faculty and staff share a vision of individual and school improvement. The school's focus on college and career readiness is evident by prioritizing writing throughout the content areas. In addition, the school has developed goals and action plans that are driving efforts to accelerate student learning by targeting reading levels, academic vocabulary acquisition, and effective questioning, to elicit higher-order thinking across all grades. Professional development is structured to address the attainment of these instructional school goals during the varied teacher team meetings as evidenced in weekly agendas. As a result, reading levels have improved significantly based on last year's data and student writing which is tracked every month shows marked and steady improvements across all grades. Students and families are engaged in developing school and student goals as the theory of action includes parent input on all levels of school decisions. The school informs parents weekly about their children's progress using data from class and benchmark assessments including unit exams, weekly tests, and student writing. The leadership and teachers have formed a very close relationship with families by including them in the development of school goals and action plans which was corroborated by all the parents interviewed during the Quality Review process.

What the school needs to improve

- Further align assessment practices across all classrooms so that teachers make effective adjustments and students are aware of their next learning steps. (2.2)
 - The school uses Fountas and Pinnell running records and assessments to record reading progress, and periodically rubrics to offer students feedback on writing. On a daily basis teachers conference within groups or with individuals to assess student understanding of reading, writing, and math. Across grades, teachers speak to the process and ultimate value of conducting one-on-one conferences with students. However, in some classrooms not all teachers or assistants such as paraprofessionals, or push-in teachers, demonstrate regularity in recording the key points of their ongoing conferences with students so that understanding of student mastery or shortcomings of knowledge and skills are clearly captured. As a consequence there is an inconsistency in the ongoing use of key data streams to significantly influence student groupings, modifications to curricula and instructional adjustments in some classrooms, and several teachers miss opportunities to further support their planning efforts to tailor instruction, particularly for English language learners and students with disabilities, hindering support to improve academic performance for all learners.
- Further strengthen the processes to regularly evaluate the quality of the curricula and school culture in meeting students' needs so that school-level decisions meet the expectations of the CCLS. (5.1)
 - The school has structures and systems to periodically monitor and evaluate what is being taught in the curricula. However, sufficient attention via adjustments to what is being taught to address the diverse and targeted learning needs of high achievers, students who are living in shelters, students living doubled up, and/or low to mid-level absentees, is not yet sufficiently evident in the curricula, impacting strategically improving student subgroup achievement.. Furthermore, while the school periodically monitors and evaluates the school environment, which provides a wonderful atmosphere for students and adults, and all constituents are held to high expectations around academic and social behaviors, a link between and monitoring the impact of attendance on student achievement is not a regular practice, nor well understood by families. Consequently, the school misses out on opportunities for improving student performance and progress via effective sharing of expectations around student attendance.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: PS 536	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
----	----------------	---	------------	---	------------	----	----------------