

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

<b>DBN:</b>	20K503
<b>District Name:</b>	District 20
<b>School Name:</b>	PS 503 The School of Discovery
<b>School Address:</b>	330 59 <sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, New York 11220
<b>Principal:</b>	Bernadette Fitzgerald
<b>Accountability Phase/Category:</b>	Improvement (year-1) - Comprehensive
<b>Area of Identification:</b>	English Language Arts - All Students; Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners and Educationally Disadvantaged Students
<b>Dates of On-site Review:</b>	February 28-29 , 2012

**PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT**

“P.S. 503 is a safe place where all members of our diverse community learn side by side with one another. Habits of mind are taught, practiced, valued, and infused into our culture. It is our mission to welcome and celebrate all peoples and to nurture them to be more reflective, cooperative and kindhearted.

It is our expectation that all P.S. 503 members; staff, families and students, will grow academically and gain the skill to help solve social, environmental, economic, and political world problems.”

**PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS**

- The school is well maintained and reflects a culture that promotes collaboration among the school leadership, staff, parents, and students.
- The parents and students interviewed were vocal supporters of the school staff and programs. The parents of students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs) expressed their satisfaction with the staff’s responsiveness to their children.
- The school leaders and staff have included the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in each unit of study in English language arts (ELA). Staff members have received professional development (PD) in an approved teacher/principal effectiveness framework. Teachers are using the framework to develop goals for themselves and to implement the schoolwide goal of improving student engagement.

- Pupil personnel staff provides on-going support to students and their teachers when a student is identified as being at-risk. The school has a Response to Intervention (RtI) plan that includes a variety of intensive supports from school personnel and the staff of community based organizations (CBOs).
- The school has an on-site health clinic that provides medical and dental care for students.

### **PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA**

##### **FINDING:**

The available formative and summative data are not consistently used as a tool for identifying student skills, abilities and educational needs to develop instructional goals to accommodate the varied student skill levels, including at-risk students in the identified subgroups, i.e., all students, Hispanic students, students with disabilities, English language Learners (ELLs) and economically disadvantaged students.

##### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The school leaders should review and evaluate the current system of data analysis and develop guidelines for teachers to assist them in selecting from among the available data sources those data points that can best be used to develop class and individual instructional goals. School leaders should provide PD for teachers to enable them to use the data available to align their instruction more closely to the specific needs of their students and support and monitor the progress of all students.

#### **II. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

##### **FINDINGS:**

- Across the grades, the use of questioning in instructional practice to promote student higher-order thinking skills was inconsistent and varied among teachers. The questions asked by teachers were usually limited to factual recall questions that required one-word answers.
- Based on classroom observations, differentiated instruction was not consistently implemented across all classrooms. There was limited evidence that data is used to match tasks and activities to students' differing ability levels and individual needs.
- Student engagement in meaningful instructional activities was inconsistent, and often lessons did not sustain the interest of students. In some classes, students were not active participants in the learning process; for example, students were observed reading independently without a set purpose. In one class, teachers waited until all students were finished with their task before moving on to the next activity. These practices resulted in a loss of instructional time.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The school leaders should provide professional development (PD) to support teachers in developing a variety of questioning techniques aimed at developing students' higher-order thinking and problem solving skills. These PD efforts should include specific work where teachers are given guided practice in developing questions and class activities that require students to create new thinking (synthesis), compare and contrast information (analysis) and use criteria to evaluate. School leaders should conduct frequent walkthroughs and observations to ensure that strategies identified during PD are incorporated by teachers into their daily delivery of instruction.
- The school leader should provide PD opportunities for teachers on a variety of instructional strategies that can be used to differentiate instruction. Within the PD, there should be an emphasis on using data to drive lesson planning and instruction and helping teachers create initial tasks that match the academic levels of students, with particular attention to those students in identified subgroups. School leaders should regularly monitor lesson planning and instructional practice in the classroom to ensure that differentiated activities are in place throughout the school. Ongoing PD should be provided for teachers, as indicated by observations and classroom walkthroughs.
- School leaders should provide PD that introduces teachers to a wide range of instructional strategies that could be used in the classroom to promote meaningful student engagement in the learning process. The learning activities planned should be selected and scaffolded to support students' individual academic needs. This practice should ensure that the given tasks are at the students' instructional level. As part of the observation process, the school leaders should monitor the use of these strategies and their impact on student achievement and provide additional PD for teachers when necessary.

## **III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

### **FINDING:**

The school has adopted Teachers College Reading and Writing Project as the primary curriculum for improving literacy instruction. The program is in the third year of implementation, and there is limited evidence the school has assessed the effectiveness of the program and its impact on improvement in student achievement in ELA.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The school leaders should analyze the effectiveness of the current ELA program to improve student achievement. Based on the analysis, school leaders should make adjustments in emphasis and implementation of the curriculum. The school leaders should continue the work that has begun on aligning the ELA units to address the CCLS and provide teachers with additional PD when necessary.

#### **IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**

##### **FINDING:**

The school does not have a designated space to house a contracted speech teacher who provides mandated services for students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs).

##### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The school should review the building plan and the allocation of classroom and office space to identify an appropriate location for the speech teacher to provide mandated services. A dedicated space should prevent disruptions that may adversely impact the mandated services being provided.

#### **V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

##### **FINDING:**

Based upon review of documentation and interviews, the review team found little evidence that the paraprofessional staff consistently participates in PD opportunities to support the instructional practices of the classroom teachers with whom they work.

##### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The school leader should schedule the paraprofessional staff to attend schoolwide PD, when related to their assignments, and provide additional PD targeted to specific paraprofessional job responsibilities to ensure that paraprofessionals are providing optimal support in the classroom.

#### **VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

##### **FINDINGS:**

- Classroom libraries did not consistently include materials and books in students' native languages to support the development of their first language.
- The school has established a relationship with a nearby public library because another school in the building is using the library space for other purposes.

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- All classroom libraries should be assessed and expanded where needed to include materials and books in the students' native languages.
- School leaders should work with the other school leaders in the building to review the space plan to ensure all students in the building have access to a functional, on-site media center to provide opportunities for independent research, expanded literature selections and exposure to multimedia

resources to support students varied interests and learning modalities. School leaders from both schools should collaborate to identify and secure funding for additional resources for the campus library.

#### **PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning, and the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 CCLS, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.