

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The McKinley Park School**

**P.S. 127**

**7805 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York  
NY 11228**

**Principal: Agatha Alicandro**

**Dates of review: February 26-27, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 127 is an elementary school with 541 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 22% Hispanic, 63% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal strategically hires personnel to meet the needs of all subgroups and uses resources effectively to support the school's instructional goals in order to close the achievement gap. (1.3)
  - In order to support the school's instructional goals to close the achievement gap among sub-groups in ELA and Math by 10%, the principal strategically hired two special education teachers to act as coaches for special education staff. They also provide push in support to upper and lower grade classroom teachers by modeling strategies to meet the mandates on IEP's for students in general education classrooms. For example, the use of "wait time" is a strategy used to allow students with disabilities (SWD's) to process information before giving a response. Consequently, the collaboration between the special education coach and classroom teachers has increased student progress toward closing the achievement gap, as evidenced in Acuity gains indicated in the principal's mid year summary of goals.
  - The principal purposely structured the school schedule to allow time for an F status teacher to provide an additional prep for all teachers, which are used for professional development on effective teaching strategies in English language arts (ELA) and math. This is in addition to the two common preps teachers are already receiving to align instruction with the new CCLS. In addition, a school based option was approved so that teacher teams meet every Wednesday, after school to conduct inquiry work and design rigorous student tasks. This has improved student academic performance as evidenced by 75.1% of all students scoring at Levels 3 & 4 from 63.3% the previous year in math. In ELA, 62.1% of all students scored at Levels 3 & 4, up from 50.3% the prior year.
- School leadership maintains a culture of mutual trust to provide support for the academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
  - The school has created an environment where students are empowered to believe in themselves and seek their highest potential to meet high standards of excellence. The Student Council provides opportunities for students to be active participants within their community with activities such as Penny Harvest, Toys for Tots and supporting Hurricane Sandy Relief Efforts. Students decide through a round table discussion where the funds collected through the Penny Harvest are to be donated. Through the school wide program, Competent Kids, Caring Classrooms (CKCC), students develop character and citizenship traits such as sharing, being honest, and helping others. The Book of the Month is selected to support the CKCC program which incorporates social-emotional principals as well as improves literacy skills. Students state that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe, as is evidenced by the school's high attendance rate, which is at 95%.
  - Through Pupil Personnel Team (PPT) Meetings and Response to Intervention (Rtl) strategies, the administration and staff meet to discuss any student concerns identified by the classroom teacher. Items

discussed at these meetings include not only academic concerns, but emotional and social issues as well. Once a plan is established and implemented the team benchmarks its success. An example of a practice that resulted from the PPT meeting was the establishment of a boys' support group conducted by the guidance counselor to address a need expressed by a number of teachers that noticed many negative interactions among boys. After developing behavior management plans for each of the boys, teachers saw a decrease in the number of incidents involving boys.

- The principal establishes and effectively communicates with staff and families, high expectations to support student progress toward college and career readiness for all students. (3.4)
  - To establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, the administration provides a Staff Handbook around professionalism, such as the importance of tracking student progress, teacher's mandated participation in professional development, as well as incorporating proven instructional practices to support the school's academic goals. School leaders communicate, support and hold teacher's accountable for high expectations through goal setting, formal and informal observations and progress monitoring of their professional goals. In addition, administrators track student progress toward June goals. Consequently, teachers report that they share a mutual accountability for high expectations as evidenced by 100% of teachers indicating that school leaders place a high priority on the quality of teaching at the school, reflected on the 2011-2012 Learning Environment Survey.
  - The school conducts many forums for families which consistently communicate high expectations for learning at parent teacher association (PTA) meetings and parent workshops. Once a month, on a Friday, the principal conducts an event called "A Cup of Coffee and A Scoop of Info", which is a way to keep parents informed of everything happening at the school. Student monthly progress sheets are distributed to parents that are aligned to the new Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) which allow parents to be true partners in supporting their child's academic and personal growth. The parent coordinator conducts workshops during the year in support of the CCLS. In addition, parents are informed of school activities through the use of monthly calendars, a school newsletter, E-Chalk, a parent e-mail group, all of which are available in multiple languages. The trust and faith that parents have in the school was evidenced during the parent interview, where parents had high praise for the school and the principal's belief in transparency with parents.
- The Leadership uses observations to capture strengths and next steps to support teacher development, and targeted professional development to leads to improved student performance. (4.1)
  - The principal and assistant principal visit classrooms on a regular basis and use a tracking sheet to ensure that by June of 2013, all teaching staff will have six cycles of formative observations with actionable feedback. Using the Danielson model, the teacher effectiveness tracking sheet that the administration uses to benchmark teacher performance, giving the

teachers specific areas of improvement. This also allows for further analysis to identify trends in practice, and guide professional development opportunities. In addition, it helps leaders to individualize support, as well as allowing for teacher reflection. Professional development has focused on the Chancellor's Instructional Expectations and to that end; the focus across classrooms has been to enhance questioning and discussion techniques. The school participates in the Department of Education's Teacher Effectiveness Intensive Program, which has provided teachers with ongoing support to reach their goals. In conjunction with this support and feedback from the short frequent cycles of observation, teachers are afforded a continuum of small steps to the attainable goal of incorporating accountable talk and using higher order questions in their lessons toward their professional growth, in alignment with the school's goals.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Develop grading policies aligned to key standards and develop classroom assessment practices among all grades that reflect checks for understanding and student self assessment to close the achievement gap. (2.2)
  - The school is just beginning to redesign their report card to align to key State standards. Also, in the kindergarten and first grade classes students do not have a student rubric to assess their own work to create student independence in developing their next steps, as well as to provide teachers with feedback on their learning. Across the school, cycles of classroom observations reveal that teachers are inconsistently using ongoing checks for students' understanding during lessons. As a result, this does not allow for all students, including sub groups, to effectively participate in the lesson thus, limiting opportunities for teachers to adjust their instruction in order to provide all students with feedback to increase academic performance and close the achievement gap.
- Implement rigorous and refined tasks with higher order skills, across the curricula to cognitively engage English language learners and students with disabilities, in order to continue to close the achievement gap. (1.1)
  - The school has been exploring the instructional shift of rigor in all content areas. Teachers are in the process of creating standards-driven curriculum maps that encourage students to engage in higher level thinking. This is an in depth project for the school this year and has teachers exploring essential questions using Depth of Knowledge in classrooms and Universal Design for Learning, which is helping teachers develop multiple entry points for all learners. However, while the school has hired additional staff to support ELLs and SWDs, currently tasks do not consistently engage all students in critical thinking. For example, if the English as a second language teacher (ESL) or special needs teacher is not pushing into a particular classroom, these sub-groups were not consistently engaged in rigorous tasks aligned to support their academic needs by the general education teacher, as observed by this reviewer during classroom visits.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The McKinley Park School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>					
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?				<b>X</b>			
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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 students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				<b>X</b>			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>