

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Emma Lazarus School

K268

**133 East 53rd Street
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Vangela Kirton

Dates of review: November 27- 28, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 268 is an elementary school with 489 students from Pre-K through grade five. The school population comprises 95% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 93.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School administrators ensure that the use of resources, coaches, and teacher assignments intentionally target support for students, especially subgroups, in meeting instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The school's program is strategically structured to provide three ninety-minute blocks of reading or math instruction on alternating weeks. Alignment of instructional goals and long-range action plans produce in-depth explorations in content and skills areas, which leverage progress in performance as demonstrated in end of unit assessments and student writing samples. Further, teachers have two-three periods weekly of meeting time. As such, collaborative teacher teams engage in an inquiry approach to improve upon pedagogy in order to strengthen the delivery of instruction, which empower students with multiple strategies for access to challenging tasks and academic activities.
 - Teacher assignments result in groups of teachers sharing responsibility for a select group of students creating optimized opportunities to closing achievement gaps and hastening progress. As such, two fifth grade teachers who have longitudinal success in teaching either reading or math collaborate to provide instruction to both classes of students in their area of expertise. This built-in accountability system results in these students experiencing higher levels of progression than their fifth grade peers on mid checkpoints and class assessments. In addition, a third grade teacher who is assigned to a class with the majority of third grade beginner ELL students receives ongoing professional development from the Office of English Language Learners. The focus on academic language and a technology-based program buttress incremental gains in accuracy rates and concepts of print among these students. Furthermore, flexible scheduling of first and second grade students with disabilities from an Integrated Collaborative Team classroom into a part-time self-contained model daily links least restrictive environment City-wide instructional expectations and their Individualized Educational Plan mandates. As such, the school is on track to meeting instructional goals.
- The school has a refined curriculum, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, which fosters college and career readiness in all grades. (1.1)
 - The school develops its curricula to align with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) emphasizing key standards such as major shifts in math, informational reading, and evidence-based writing across all grades and content, including visual art and physical education. Units of Study adopted from the Common Core Library embed performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) that complement adjustments to reading and math programs aligned with CCLS. This work is evident in curriculum maps that incorporate a variety of non-fiction materials, require students to construct mathematical models and diagrams, and reflect diverse resources. Consequently, purposeful decisions about curricula and pedagogy result in all students participating in college and career

readiness activities, which include supports and accommodations for specialized instruction as well as interdisciplinary engagements.

- Teachers utilize student work to make appropriate revisions to the written curriculum that strengthens the delivery of instruction. Thus, analysis of mid chapter checkpoint tests and samples of student work with multi-step word problems instigate investigations that produce varied scaffolds for groups of student. Therefore, expectations for rigor have risen as evidenced by SWD and ELL students' use of standard-based rubrics and graphic organizers. Refinements to curriculum ensure access to learning and reflect adequate supports that cognitively challenge all students.
- The use of common assessments and rubrics in all content areas enable teachers to define and prioritize next steps in meeting student needs. (2.2)

The use of systematized common assessments result in teams of teachers gathering and analyzing quality data trails that surface specific trends and influence class-level instruction and curricula decisions leading to flexible guided reading groups, interest groups, intervention groups, and tiered groups. The school also utilizes rubrics that vary according to grade, task, genre, and content such as a writing rubric utilized by first and second graders that helps students to focus on writing mechanics versus a third grade rubric that focuses on organization of ideas and use of good writing strategies. The use of these tools engenders teacher feedback to students that help them to understand what they do well and how to improve upon areas of challenge. During classroom visits, students were observed applying their understanding of decimals by reading, writing, and representing numerical place value through thousandths. Students in a special education classroom used graphic organizers to analyze text-based evidence thereby explaining cause and effect relationships between events in the life of fictional character Paul Bunyan. Consequently, students demonstrate movement in reading levels, on writing tasks, and in their ability to apply conceptual understanding to new math concepts as evidenced in work products.

- Teachers work effectively in structured inquiry teams that result in coordinated efforts to improve pedagogy and student learning. (4.2)
 - Regular weekly meetings in collaborative teams afford teachers opportunities to take on leadership roles, plan lessons, review data, and share best practices. One teacher described this dedicated time as “support for each other as a cohesive team”. Therefore, with a collective eye toward developing an in-depth understanding of required shifts in their rollout of the Common Core Standards, teachers brainstorm pedagogical next steps such as providing options for students, extending lessons, assigning tailored homework, re-teaching, using manipulatives, and integrating the use of technology into lessons. Thus, the identification of a variety of instructional approaches promotes additional strategies for improved teacher and student outcomes, which positions the school for achievement of annual goals.
 - Grade leaders are responsible for facilitation of meetings and turnkey of initiatives and also present their colleagues ideas, concerns, and grade level work during meetings with school leaders. This evolution in building

teacher capacity is in keeping with instructional expectations and teacher effectiveness goals. Teachers own the work of designing curriculum and readily adapt reading and math programs to better meet the needs of students. For example, analysis of overall student performance on an end of chapter test led grade level teachers to extend the unit on solving multi-step word problems in order to foster more exposure with mathematical terms, procedural vocabulary, and additional strategies for finding partial products. As such, efforts to improve pedagogy and stimulate professional learning leverage opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles and make key instructional decisions that impact student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen teacher questioning and discussion techniques to better align with cognitive challenges embedded in curricula resulting in effective use of student ideas and higher levels of student participation. (1.2)
 - The school's focus on Danielson's elements of engaging students in learning and using questioning and discussion techniques to deepen student understanding does not yet yield a series of questions or prompts that advance student thinking and discourse. For example, across classrooms discussions primarily take place between teacher and student, excluding the occasional pair and share strategy. Similarly, teacher questions were of a recitation type whereby students responded with rote memory answers or in short sentences. Consequently, teacher limited use of high level thought provoking questions result in missed opportunities for students to engage in rich discussions, develop critical thinking skills, and extend ideas. As a result, enhancement of curricula and higher levels of motivated class participation are stymied.
- Extend the quality of written feedback to teachers through rubric-based delineated, formative feedback that clarify expectations for improved teacher practice. (4.1)
 - School leaders have conducted several rounds of short, frequent snapshots as well as formal observations in support of increased teacher effectiveness. Although low inference feedback to novice and experienced teachers capture strengths as commendations and areas for development as suggestions, next step feedback does not include actionable concrete plans, which guide pedagogical improvement. Consequently, snapshot feedback is not consistently effective in furthering instructional strategies toward improved student outcomes.
 - The school is using the Danielson Framework to reflect on teacher practice. Nevertheless, feedback to teachers does not align to the language of the rubric. As such, the lack of common language around expectations hinders teachers understanding their own needs relative to domains and competencies. Therefore, slowed exposure to the language of the rubric impedes teacher capacity to elevate practice in order to hasten improved student work and achievement data.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Emma Lazarus 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 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X				
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?		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 support 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 them?			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 students' 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 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?		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