

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

New American Academy

Elementary School PS 770

**60 East 94th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11212**

Principal: Shimon Waronker

Dates of review: January 9-10, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons

Associate Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 770 New American Academy is an elementary school with students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 82% Black, 10% Hispanic, 0% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 11% Special Education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 87.32%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School faculty align curricula to State standards, make decisions to target key standards and units of study, and refine tasks in order to promote college readiness across all grades and content areas. (1.1)
 - The Staff has aligned the literacy and math curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) across all grades and content areas. Pre- and post-unit tasks were incorporated within the units of study to inform student progress. The school recycles through the genres to ensure students' depth of understanding. Teachers look at the standards and perform a gap analysis, use Lucy Calkins to assist in writing core pacing calendars and Teacher's College based curricula. Through team conversations about curriculum design and student success, teachers create interdisciplinary connections through unit of studies and daily afternoon interdisciplinary classes. The real world application can be seen in six interdisciplinary units of study, which include agriculture, medicine, transportation, energy, engineering and communication. Within these units, children work to investigate and answer essential questions and perform experiments. To build students' base of knowledge in Science, teachers decided to follow-up hands-on experiences with curricular content. For example, the first and second grade classes, spent time discussing focus questions and then students worked independently to apply experiential learning and further build knowledge and concepts. The focus of instructional shifts in reading resulted in more than 50% of the third grade moving up 4+ reading levels from June 2011 to June 2012 as evidenced by Fountas and Pinnell reading levels. The school motivates their students for college and career readiness by identifying classes with the name of a university. In the Jackie Robinson cohort the universities represented are Cornell, Cooper Union and RPI. In the Benjamin Banneker cohort the universities represented are Howard and LIU. As such, students are made aware in the formative years about the importance of post secondary education for all learners.
- The school leader makes organizational decisions to enhance student support and instructional resources aligned to the school's instructional goals in order to address students' learning needs. (1.3)
 - One of the school's goals is increasing students' performance in reading complex texts. To support students in meeting this goal and provide additional alignment to the CCLS foundational skills, the school purchased and implemented Words Their Way, Daily Edit, Open Court, Foundations, Reading Recovery techniques, Fountas and Pinnell, phonics, spelling and word study. The school is also focusing on healthy development. Though all NYC schools have breakfast programs, the school strategically modifies their time schedule. Breakfast is served from 9:00 am to 9:30 am. This allows for students to have morning exercise after breakfast. In addition, this gives teachers 90 minutes to plan daily. The school leader supports staff by structuring teams that positively impact teaching and learning. Teachers attend five week summer training at Harvard. To maximize resources in the service of student learning, the teams share actionable goals and foster discourse around student work and teacher

practice. A tenet of this training is on communication, reflection and listening skills. The school also engages all constituencies in hiring teachers through a six step hiring process. This includes a written application, phone interview, group unit building activity, panel interview, reference checks and demonstration lesson. Candidates are observed and assessed by parents, teachers and administrators for content knowledge, pedagogy and reflective practice. To improve student performance, the school has developed a unique model that utilizes a ratio of 15:1 to provide small group instruction. This model allows for four teachers, led by a master teacher, to plan and teach together. In addition, students loop with the same teachers and classmates. Regular collaboration on teacher teams, made possible through creative programming, provides an opportunity for teachers to share best practices which have pushed student achievement across grades as evidenced in formal assessments and teacher observations.

- The school is a caring community which cultivates effective relationships between adults and students that fosters their personal and academic development in a safe environment. (1.4)
 - Staff, students and parents use attributes of humility, empowerment, aspiration, responsibility and teamwork (H.E.A.R.T) to promote a positive school community. As the first step to developing and maintaining a culture of safety and respect, all teachers, students, staff and parents were trained in H.E.A.R.T which promotes a multi-level expectation system designed to build community. Parents and students interviewed were able to share and define the H.E.A.R.T system. During the first year of implementation of H.E.A.R.T, the school had 23 suspensions. The second year the school had 9 suspensions and now in its third year, there have been no suspensions to date. Most incidents of student misbehavior, while infrequent, occurred during lunch. To address this, the teachers eat lunch with their students. In addition, the school monitors students' attendance. For example, the staff creates an incentive for students with regular attendance and contact families to stay connected. As such, the attendance rate has improved by 1.1% from 93.9% to 95% as measured by ATS daily attendance reports. All teachers implement a system that measures student behavior against a chart with a series of colors ranging from purple, blue, green, white, yellow and red. Throughout the day children can see where they are progressing. This practice teaches students to be more responsible for their actions and thus support a positive learning community.
- Teacher teams engage in frequent structured inquiry to examine student work, adjust curriculum and refine teaching practices to promote the attainment of the school's instructional goals. (4.2)
 - Inquiry team members monitor student progress and adjust instruction to meet their needs. Teachers meet daily to plan, analyze data and conduct professional development. At a grade three teacher team meeting, teachers collaborated on analyzing their English language arts Fall Benchmark Assessment. Out of seven students that completed the third grade assessment, only two of them yielded 60% points. The teachers discussed the implications and looked at specific questions where the children perform well. The impetus was on revising the curriculum to introduce the genre of folktale and adding test sophistication to allow students to become more familiar with test questions. During another team meeting, teachers watched a colleague's previous lesson and reflected on the practices used. Teachers vetted questions and shared next steps for their

colleague and students that they share. As a result to the immediate feedback, teachers state that they strengthen their instructional capabilities which improve the progress of their students.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen teacher questioning strategies to support student participation and discussion with peers to promote higher level of student thinking for all students. (1.2)
 - Although teacher teams thoughtfully focus on the planning and refinement of lessons, tasks, and strategies using student work analysis, along with problem solving protocols to meet the needs of all students, this process does not yet include a lens to ensure that the highest level students in each class are suitably challenged to their maximum potential. In the majority of classrooms observed, the dialogue existed between teacher and student. In addition, there were uneven levels of student participation. This limits the school's ability to suitably challenge the highest achieving students and provide opportunities for all students to engage and use their voice in rigorous learning across the school.
- Strengthen classroom assessment so that students are aware of their progress and instructional next steps. (2.2)
 - Teachers use assessments to analyze student work and make determinations about students' next steps. Teachers have begun to provide rubrics to students and .make over-arching adjustments to teaching based on the information they gather during lesson delivery. However, the lack of varied checks for on-the-spot understanding during whole group lesson delivery results in missed opportunities to identify students' misunderstanding and reduces the ability for teachers to troubleshoot throughout the lesson and make timely changes so that all students are able to show mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 770 New American Academy	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