



**Department of
Education**

Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

**Quality Review: Quality Review Report
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2012-2013**

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Countee Cullen

Elementary School 194

244 West 144th Street

New York

NY 10030

Principal: Josephine Bazan

Dates of review: April 8 – 9, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Countee Cullen is an elementary school with 244 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 53% Black, 41% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian, and 3% other students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 88.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School systems and partnerships support students in a safe environment where improving student outcomes are a high priority. (1.4)
 - Academic and social achievements are rewarded during school assemblies and celebrated on hallway bulletin boards. Parents stated that there is better order and structure in the building this school year, the principal has an open door policy, and it is evident to them that “education is valued.” After a review of the School Survey and incident reports revealed safety concerns, a weekly professional development series facilitated by Turn Around for Children was developed focusing on the Kagan structures for classroom management and student engagement. This supports a positive school tone, which is evident throughout the building. The text “The 7 Habits of Happy Kids” by Sean Covey was purchased and is used by teachers to study and develop strategies so that students demonstrate appropriate actions of caring for each other. Pro-social behaviors and core values such as integrity, kindness, honesty, and trust are emphasized and displayed on hallways throughout the school. As a result, these efforts are already demonstrating results as noted by the 60% reduction in the number of incidents reported online compared to last year’s data. Additionally, there is a focus on developing students’ leadership capacity. A school wide recycling team comprised of students across grade levels coordinates a sustainability project focused on maintaining a clean environment while teaching their peers about the necessity for a “green” environment. The students’ basketball club and Young Runners club also supports students’ leadership skills as students on both clubs are encouraged to set good examples for their peers by the manner in which they exemplify core values via their daily conduct. As noted in the student meeting, these initiatives bolster their self-esteem and the growth of their leadership skills. These efforts also enable students to value differences and learn in an inclusive, safe environment that fosters their personal success.
 - Every student is well known by multiple school faculty who help support their academic growth with tutoring and small group intervention strategies. School wide initiatives, such as “Cupcake Monday” allows for a monthly celebration so that students are recognized with a cupcake for their birthday, making them feel extra special. The Behavior Coordination Team (BCT) comprised of the social worker, guidance counselor, attendance teacher, family worker, and school administrators, meets weekly to review attendance and guidance reports in order to note trends and address areas of need. Based on anecdotal reports, team members swiftly respond to students’ health, social emotional and academic needs. Outreach efforts result in phone calls and home visits. Additionally, this data analysis informs plans for added supports from Harlem Children’s Zone, which provides homework help and recreational activities, Lens Crafters, which provides eye exams and free glasses and the Harlem Hospital Health Clinic, which coordinates medical needs for students and their families. Such community-based partnerships provide after school tutoring, recreational and family support services and integrate with school-based guidance services to meet the needs of targeted students and their

families. These efforts result in an increase in monthly attendance rates and increased motivational aspirations to succeed as noted in student and parent meetings.

- The principal has begun prioritizing the use of resources and makes strategic decisions to support the school's goals and improve student outcomes. (1.3)
 - School administrators recently implemented a Saturday test prep program for grades 3 through 5 and an after school program two times a week to address the academic needs of English language learners (ELLs). The Foundations program was purchased to support phonemic development at the lower grade level and professional development is planned for the end of the school year. Additionally, listening centers were bought for each classroom and training is presently being planned so that students and teachers will utilize these centers proficiently in September. Resources from a technology grant, such as hardware and software were purchased to support the neediest student population. Smart boards were allotted to each Integrated Co-Teaching class (ICT) with the goal to eventually expand so that every class has the use of such tools. Technology training has begun so that teachers will be able to proficiently use Smart boards throughout the instructional day in order to further support student engagement. As such, school administrators are focused on further aligning resources with the school's goals and those resources presently available are beginning to positively impact student learning as noted in student work folders.
 - The principal and assistant principal, in addition to other members of the hiring committee, interview prospective candidates and observe them modeling lessons prior to being hired. School wide literacy and math skills periods recently built into the schedule encourage teachers to begin to thoughtfully address students' needs. Additionally, teachers provide small group tutorials each week and students are grouped during the extended day timeframe in order to more closely address their instructional needs. Since the school does not presently have a full time literacy coach, the assistant principal and lead teachers provide support during the weekly 90-minute professional development sessions. As a result, alignment across systems and structures to address the needs of varied groups of students and staff are presently developing.
- Teachers work in collaborative teams and are developing strategies to share practices and analyze data with a focus on helping students succeed. (4.2)
 - All classroom-based teachers participate in weekly grade meetings. Additionally, a vertical inquiry team meets weekly with a focus on identifying the needs of students performing in the lowest third. Teachers conducting an item skill analysis to identify the needs of these students noted that a lack of critical thinking strategies and limited sight vocabulary are impeding student progress. Teachers were recently trained on utilizing protocols to look at students' work, are at the beginning stages of noting trends, and have recently begun to discuss strategies to support identified groups of students. Additionally, staff are in the early phase of establishing specific instructional goals in order to track and accelerate student progress.

- Three instructional lead teachers frequently meet with the principal and assistant principal to share feedback from grade and vertical team meetings. Lead teachers are eager to learn and are at the infancy stages of reflecting on their techniques as facilitators of adult learning. Furthermore, teachers attend professional development at the network level; facilitate team meetings, turnkey taught strategies to their peers, and provide feedback to school administrators. As a result, teachers feel empowered as decision makers and are beginning to volunteer for specific roles, thus deepening their leadership skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the curriculum to reflect alignment with key standards and Common Core learning tasks to increase rigor and cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - The math coach and school leaders adjusted the curricula in order to make changes to the math scope and sequence and to integrate Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into math units of study. During common planning meetings staff are in the process of further adjusting the English language arts (ELA) curricula by noting gaps and revising their unit plans in order to ensure that it is fully aligned to the standards. Although staff utilize units from the Common Core library, they are in the early phase of selecting specific key standards to integrate and emphasize. For example, in one class students read an opinion text on the banning of cell phones and were asked to write about why phones should be banned. Students were not exposed to multiple perspectives and most students gave their opinions but did not routinely cite text to support their verbal and written arguments. As a result, the school is missing out on incorporating the instructional shifts to address its widening achievement gap between the lowest and highest achieving students.
 - Curricula and academic tasks emphasize higher order thinking skills in some grades and content areas. For example in one lower grade class students asked the custodian prepared questions to support their understanding of their unit of study on community helpers. However, these practices are not yet evident across all grades and subjects. In another classroom, students were asked to complete a level one Depth of Knowledge (DOK) task and write the definition of five elements of a story (plot, setting, characters, conflict, and theme). The elements were taught in isolation and the alignment of the task to the curriculum was not evident. Additionally, teachers do not consistently utilize student work products to refine their practices. As a result, many teachers do not yet demonstrate the necessary skill level to cognitively engage students performing at varied ability levels, especially higher achieving students. Consequently, performance-based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning do not extend across all content areas and grade levels so that all students, including English language learners and student with disabilities, are suitably challenged, are able to make personal connections to themselves and the world, and are able to transfer their learning to new contexts.

- Improve instructional practices across classrooms to ensure that diverse learners are consistently provided with challenging tasks enabling them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Some teachers prepare lessons that target the specific needs and strengths of students and employ questioning strategies and varied tasks that address a range of student ability levels. This however, is not the practice in every class. In one math class where the focus was on ordering fractions, all students were given the same questions. It was evident that some students understood the task and quickly finished the exercise, yet were not provided with additional extensions to accelerate their learning. Others, who did not complete the work as quickly, did not receive suitable academic support necessary to complete the task. Additionally, although students sit in groups, teachers do not always use formative data to make assignments or to develop appropriately challenging tasks. As such, most teachers do not yet plan lessons that demonstrate sufficient engagement in higher order thinking so that meaningful work products demonstrate activities that stretch the thinking of all learners including English language learners, students with individual education plans, and those performing at the highest achievement levels.
 - Teachers are beginning to employ open-ended questions to spark discussions, and students in some classrooms are questioning each other's assumptions and ideas. However, this is not consistent; in many classrooms, questions and answers are most often between teacher and individual student. Consequently, thought-provoking questions, conversations that give students the chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds and use questions as a way to learn more, are not yet the norm across grades.

- Ensure consistent use of varied ongoing assessment practices and analysis of student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level. (2.2)
 - Teachers use common grade level assessments including Acuity and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) data to track student growth. Some teachers display this data on tracking charts in their classrooms. During planning meetings, teachers were recently trained to utilizing protocols to analyze student work products. However, thus far, their approach is limited to identifying the needs of individual students. While some teachers track results, others do not yet systematically do so. Consequently, all teachers are not consistently making needed changes to the curriculum, student groupings, and their instructional practices.
 - Staff were provided with professional development on conferring strategies and on higher level questioning to support student engagement and monitor student understanding. However, although teachers walk the room to monitor groups and individual students at work and repeatedly ask questions, many do not take notes or analyze student responses to check for understanding. Students also have not yet been taught to self-monitor their work in order to assess if their answers align with facts and make sense. This hinders students' ability to make timely and effective adjustments and teachers do not provide ongoing feedback so that students are able to master concepts and further their own learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Countee Cullen	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