

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**PS 200 James McCune Smith**

**Elementary School M200**

**2589 7 Avenue  
Manhattan  
NY 10039**

**Principal: Renee Belton**

**Dates of review: November 29-30, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

James McCune Smith School M200 is an elementary school with 527 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 60% Black, 37% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school community effectively uses partnerships to create a safe and nurturing environment that provides students with the social-emotional supports they need to succeed. (1.4)
  - The school has developed support systems to promote student and adult learning in a safe and nurturing environment. For example, network specialists provide teachers with training in behavior management strategies and a social worker from Harlem Hospital provides training for social and emotional learning by students and staff. There is a newsletter written by the students and a student government body that allow them to share concerns with the principal orally or in writing. For example, the student government met with the principal to argue for a salad bar and that suggestion was implemented. As a result, students benefit from an inclusive culture where adults encourage and value their contributions to school decision-making.
  - Teachers team up with each other and partner with other adults to provide extra tutoring and other intervention services to support student learning. An attendance team comprised of administrators, a guidance counselor, parent coordinator and a parent representative, meets biweekly to address attendance problems and schedule conferences for parents of students who are chronically late or absent. The parent coordinator helps to coordinate medical services from Harlem Hospital for the school and collaborates with staff and parents to promote family outreach activities such as curriculum nights, while social studies teachers work with families to host a multicultural feast in celebration of Thanksgiving. This support of the entire school community creates a culture that generates growth in adult and student academic and personal behaviors that support learning.
- School leaders and faculty analyze assessments to determine students' academic strengths and needs and implement interventions to improve achievement. (2.2)
  - Across classrooms, there is evidence of the use of rubrics to assess student performance. In some classrooms there are teacher-made and task-specific rubrics that are linked to student performance on unit tasks. Benchmark and unit assessments are aligned with key standards and curricula. Additionally, teachers analyze data from formative assessments, running records, STAR assessment and projects. As a result, data analyses are beginning to provide effective feedback to teachers and students regarding student progress and performance.
  - The school has implemented common assessments to determine student progress towards goals. Lesson plans show reference to technology-based assessment programs that are used to customize assessment tasks linked to unit plans and curriculum maps. Individuals, as well as teams of teachers, analyze results of assessments to determine student strengths and areas of need. As a result, teacher teams are beginning to make data driven adjustments to curriculum and instruction, including decisions about mainstreaming or Response To Intervention (RTI) for individual students.

- The principal makes organizational decisions to insure resources are aligned to instructional goals and improvement in student achievement. (1.3)
  - To promote effective instruction across grades, teachers are programmed for a weekly common planning meeting. There are team meetings across grades for core content areas and inquiry-based professional development. Administrators and a literacy and mathematics coach are assigned to support the weekly meetings that are teacher driven and focus on lesson planning and analysis of data from assessments. In addition, selected teachers are programmed and funded as instructional leads for grade level and/or content area planning. As a result, teachers engage in collaborative teams to improve instruction and the quality of student work.
  - Hiring practices are beginning to reflect alignment of teacher placement decisions with student needs, instructional goals and teacher capacity. Individuals with strengths in a specific content area are targeted for moves that heighten support for students, especially English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). For example, a paraprofessional was promoted to a teaching position, a teacher was moved into an assistant principal's position, and a kindergarten teacher was moved to a pre-K assignment. There are two cluster teachers assigned to work on students' writing skills, and two teachers, dually licensed in bilingual and special education, to support ELLs and SWDs. As a result, strategic placement of key staff members is beginning to support school goals and student needs.

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

- Refine the development of curricula to reflect alignment with key standards and Common Core Learning tasks that increase rigor and cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
  - There are essential questions to guide instruction in core content areas and support learning about a common topic or theme. Students are grouped flexibly to facilitate interventions planned for them and to complete differentiated tasks. However, academic tasks are not rigorous enough to promote cognitive engagement for diverse learners. For example, in one classroom, the task was for students to note details from books they were reading. In a second classroom, students used a glossary to write meanings of words that they copied from their nonfiction independent reading book. As a result, students lack exposure to learning activities that cognitively engage them and advance their learning.
  - The principal and staff are engaged in aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and designing units of instruction to implement the instructional shifts in literacy and mathematics. There are grade level curriculum maps and unit plans that focus on the shifts. For example, a math task showed real world applications of problem solving skills and in literacy, there was common use of nonfiction texts. However, bulletin board work shows limited evidence of tasks linked to the instructional shifts and most lessons consisted of students completing tasks independently or in groups, based on a generic teaching point. As a result, students lack exposure to rigorous learning experiences grounded in the demands of the CCLS.

- Develop and implement a uniform protocol for classroom observations to provide effective feedback that elevates teaching practices and identifies next steps. (4.1)
  - The school uses the Danielson's framework to inform professional development plans for all teachers, including new teachers. Administrators have engaged in a walkthrough and informal observations of selected teachers and provided oral and written feedback to them but there is inconsistent use of data from student work to inform next steps. Further, with the Principal's decision to postpone formal observations until December 2012, feedback is limited to checks on a checklist or brief notes scribbled at the bottom of the checklist or on a small slip of paper. As a result, teachers do not receive consistent feedback that effectively captures their strengths and identifies next steps to improve their practice.
  - The school is working on plans to train all teachers to implement the instructional shifts in literacy and mathematics and strengthen focus on CCLS. A team of administrators, instructional coaches, instructional lead teachers, consultants and network personnel, is in place to support this plan that includes mentoring for new teachers. However, informal observations and walkthroughs have been limited to a few teachers and there are no formal observations to date. As a result, there is limited teacher observation data to craft and implement professional development activities that promote professional growth for all teachers.
  
- Strengthen teacher practice to ensure high levels of student engagement and thinking that accelerates learning for all learners. (1.2)
  - Using Danielson's framework, across classrooms teachers use questioning to support discussion of lesson topics and texts read. Through flexible grouping and differentiated tasks, teachers and paraprofessionals focus on specific students, especially in classrooms with ELLS and SWDS, and conference with them to address learning needs. However, in most classrooms, questions are low level and tasks do not challenge students to engage in higher order thinking. For example, in one classroom the task was for students to read an excerpt of a biography and tell what they were reading about and what they learned, so they simply re-stated words from the text. In another classroom the task was to convert a math word problem into questions that students easily answered by re-reading the problem in the text. As a result, teaching practices do not meet the needs of all learners and do not adequately challenge students to produce high quality work.
  - In most classrooms, there are discussions among students as they share thinking and ideas to complete group tasks. Teachers provide prompts in questioning students about tasks done or texts read and students take turns responding. However, in most classrooms students are not invited to comment on responses given by peers and for the most part, discussions are teacher dominated and do not promote participation in discussions by all students. As a result, lessons lack higher order questioning strategies to deepen student thinking and do not provide opportunities for all students to participate meaningfully in discussions.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: James McCune Smith Elementary School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
<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?		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					
<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?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?		X					
<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?		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 <b>inquiry approach</b> 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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed