

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Muscota

Elementary

**4862 BROADWAY
MANHATTAN
NY, 10034**

Principal: CAMILLE WALLIN

Dates of review: October 25, and 26, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Nunez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Muscota is a/an Elementary school with 243 students from through grade . The school population comprises 8.2% Black, 55.1% Hispanic, 30.5% White, and 5.3% Asian students. The student body includes 9.9% English language learners and 12.8% special education students. Boys account for 46.5% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53.5%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95.08%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's strategic decisions regarding organization and use of resources support the school's goals of meeting the social and academic needs of students. (1.3)
 - Teacher teams meet for a ninety minute block on a weekly basis to engage in reviewing of student work and alignment of curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards to prepare students for grade level goals. Teams are organized across grades and include intervention teachers and service providers to assure that the needs of all students, based on student achievement data, are discussed during teacher team meetings. Comparison of baseline assessments to student work resulting from end of unit tasks, Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) and unit exams are closely analyzed by teacher teams in order to group students for targeted instruction. Teams have well established protocols on how to conduct meetings to assure that all members contribute to the discussion, agenda items are covered and that the collaborative review of student work leads to actionable steps on how to address student's needs. Teachers use rubrics that are aligned to key standards to carefully review student work in order assess the strengths and areas in need of improvement and to revise tasks and units of study to assure that students are making progress towards grade level standards. As a result, review of student work indicates that across grades students have improved in their organization of expository essays and using supporting evidence from non-fiction texts.
 - The school's hiring committee, composed of parents, teachers and administrators is responsible for assuring that all candidates poses specific professional qualities and embrace the school's progressive philosophy. The committee has developed interview questions related to the establishment of a strong home school connection, experiential learning and supporting student's social development to vet candidates and assure that staff hired will support the school's vision. The principal uses formal and informal observations and results of formative and summative student data to make decisions regarding class assignments to assure that teachers are able to meet student's academic needs. In addition, observations and results of student achievement are used to identify the professional development needs of teachers to assure that they are being adequately supported. As a result of the school's well thought out process for recruiting and supporting teachers, the school has a high teacher attendance rate and low mobility, enabling the school to develop a cadre of well trained professionals that support the school's mission.
- The school's inclusive culture is supported by staff and parents in order to promote the social and academic growth of students and adults resulting in high approval ratings of the school's efforts by parents and staff. (1.4)
 - The principal has embraced the school's strong traditions of incorporating the voices of parents and students into the school community. Central to

the vision at Muscota is the school's responsibility to provide students with a holistic education so that they can ultimately become active members of the community who are capable and willing to advocate for the good of the community. The school's mission is that students recognize how what they are learning is applicable to the real world, resulting in culture which promotes inquiry and discussion of social issues as evidenced topics highlighted in curriculum calendars and student work. As part of the Responsive Classroom model, all classes begin their day with a morning meeting to discuss academic, social and or emotional issues affecting students, providing a venue for the expression of ideas and opinions. Daily morning meetings and monthly town hall meetings are rituals that assure that the school community is aware of topics affecting students, staff and families and that collaboratively the community comes to consensus on how to move forward, assuring that the school continues to be a safe, nurturing environment for all. As a result of the inclusive culture of the school, parents believe that they have a voice when it comes to decision making and problem solving in order to collectively improve the quality of education that students receive as evidenced by interviews and the Learning Environment Survey.

- The school closely monitors the achievement of students to assure that all students are well known and that the academic and social needs of students are met. As a result of the school's low adult to student ratio, staff members get to know all students and families well and can offer targeted assistance. Teachers meet jointly with parents and individual students several times a year to develop goals and actions plans as well as to discuss progress in order to assure that students and their families are active participants in developing the social and academic needs of each student. The principals' academic intervention program requires that one period a day be dedicated to small group instruction, where additional teachers push in to each class to assure that student receive regular targeted instruction based on their needs. The school's assistant principal was also the former guidance counselor, and as a result she is very well versed on how to guide teachers in helping to address the social and emotional needs of students. The assistant principal collaborates closely with the parent coordinator to monitor attendance to assure that support is provided to students and their families who may be experiencing challenges that contribute to absenteeism. As a result, the school's attendance rate is well above the district average assuring that student time on task is maximized.
- The school gathers and analyzes meaningful sources of data, aligned to the curriculum to identify achievement trends and make instructional decisions in order to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - The school uses results of standardized testing, Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA), math baseline and midline assessments, interim assessments and end of unit tasks to gauge individual student progress and to group students for targeted instruction. The school has also engaged staff in analyzing the correlation between their assessments and the Common Core Learning Standards to assure that both are aligned and measure progress towards grade level goals. A yearlong assessment calendar for each grade provides the school community with the timeline for assessing student progress, and as a result the community is aware of important dates and can offer support. The school has developed rubrics

that focus on key standards in order to assure that students meet grade level benchmarks. As a result of teachers using rubrics that are aligned to common core standards, student writing demonstrates an increase in students citing evidence from texts to support claims and opinions. Teachers use data conversation protocols that provide guidance on specific items that are to be discussed in order to develop plans to assure interventions are appropriately planned for all students and subgroups. Intervention teachers are charged with supporting individual teachers and teacher teams in the close analysis of student performance data to enable them to develop and monitor goals for student improvement across content areas, resulting in individual student intervention plans.

- Teacher teams use rubrics to collectively review student work, to assess progress and norm grading practices, resulting in a common understanding of what students need to achieve to meet grade level standards. Rubrics are consistently used by teachers to gauge student progress on interim assessments as well as end of unit assessments, enabling them to revise instructional plans for students. This close analysis of student work has surfaced the need to implement instructional practices such as explicit teaching of reading strategies based on reading levels to enable adequate progression. While teachers use grade level texts during whole class instruction, analysis of individual student results indicate that teachers must also teach specific reading strategies to students to develop independence and stamina in all students in order to improve student outcomes on standardized exams. Additionally the TERC Investigations for math has been adopted to assure that there is a coherent plan to improve student achievement aligned to the school's philosophy of allowing student to explore and discuss concepts deeply in order to allow students to master concepts before moving on. Teacher teams indicate that results of end of unit tasks are used to revise subsequent units of study and that this data provides them with valuable insight into student achievement trends, enabling them to better address student needs.
- School leaders provide teachers with effective feedback connected to common framework as a result of cycles of observation in order to support teacher development resulting in a cadre of teachers that set clear goals for continued improvement. (4.1)
 - Cycles of observation begin with conversations with teachers, allowing for self-reflection on the identified competency and goal setting to promote teacher engagement in the improvement process. Observations by administrators are followed by debriefing sessions to provide feedback regarding accomplishments and next steps which is memorialized in writing by the principal to assure that all teachers are moving along the continuum of the framework. Inter-visitations are scheduled to allow teachers to give feedback to each other and to also support development by sharing best practices, resulting in teams of teachers that are highly reflective of their practice as it relates to the framework. Written and verbal feedback to teachers is grounded on evidence observed in the classroom and is correlated to the targeted competency with clear, explicit feedback in order to improve teaching practices. This cycle is repeated multiple times across the school year to assure that feedback from administrators and colleagues has an impact on teacher practice. In addition, review of student achievement data and observations allow the

principal to strategically group teachers on grade level teams and to pair them for teaching assignments to enable them to support each other in the development of effective teaching strategies. The improvement of questioning techniques is a target skill for the school and as a result teachers that have been identified as effective in this area by colleagues and administrators are used to model best practices. As a result of this clearly articulated cycle of observations and feedback, teachers are aware of their strengths and areas in need of improvement and in addition to inter-visitations planned by administrators, teachers also actively plan inter-visitations with colleagues in order to support each other, resulting in a highly motivated staff as evidenced by interviews and feedback on the Learning Environment Survey.

What the school needs to improve

- Further refine the curriculum to develop higher order skills for a variety of learners to ensure rigor, coherence and alignment of the school's curriculum with key standards and increase student outcomes. (1.1)
 - The school is embedding the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into the school's interdisciplinary units of study that are driven by essential questions stemming from social studies and science to produce a coherent curriculum across grades. Evident in the curriculum maps are instructional shifts in literacy such as reading and writing grounded in evidence from the text and fluency and deep understanding in math in order to assure that students develop key skills in order to reach grade level proficiency. However, some teachers do not demonstrate the necessary skill level to adapt the curricula so that it challenges students performing at varied ability levels, especially higher achieving students. As a result of lower level questions and tasks assigned by teachers, classroom observations demonstrate that not all students are actively engaged in tasks and discussions. In addition, the level of rigor of the implemented curriculum is not consistent across classrooms and as a result not all students are being challenged to perform at their highest potential in order to close the achievement gap.
 - Although the school's thematic units allow students to engage in deep investigation of topics, culminating in end of unit projects and tasks in order to assess student understanding of key concepts, review of student work surfaced the need for explicit vocabulary instruction with a focus on tiered word lists to assure that all students acquire a robust vocabulary and improve student writing. As a result, the school has begun developing strategies in order to support struggling students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disability in order to provide access and support to all units and tasks. Teacher teams plan scaffolds such as graphic organizers, sentence starters at various levels, games and concrete examples in order to meet the needs of all students. However, across classrooms these strategies are still not consistently being implemented.
- Further develop teaching practices to assure that all lessons are suitably challenging and engage all students in order to improve student outcomes. (1.2)

- The school community embraces a vision that students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process by fostering a culture of exploration and open expression of ideas to promote greater engagement with content and to make connections to the world around them. In order to support the inquiry process, the school has focused on developing the questioning skills of teachers in to promote deeper, richer student discussion. The school uses the Danielson's Framework for teaching with a specific focus on developing teachers questioning and discussion techniques in order to support students in this area. However, some teachers' understanding of the use of effective questioning and question prompts are not always effectively and strategically differentiated to extend student learning. Therefore, not all engagements appropriately challenge students' abilities or incite participation through students' strongest modalities, which limits learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Muscota	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