

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

P.S. 333 Manhattan School for Children

K-8

**154 WEST 93 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY, 10025**

Principal: SUSAN RAPPAPORT

**Dates of review: Nov 29, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Ilene Altschul**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 333 Manhattan School for Children is a/an K-8 school with 729 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 13.6% Black, 21.7% Hispanic, 56.9% White, and 6.9% Asian students. The student body includes 2.5% English language learners and 15.8% special education students. Boys account for 50.2% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49.8%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.77%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty design standards aligned curricula that emphasize rigorous habits and tasks across classrooms, promoting higher order thinking skills and post-secondary readiness. (1.1)
 - The school has been engaged in curriculum alignment and revisions for the past two years and has made purposeful decisions incorporating priority standards including high-level questions and rigorous tasks as evidenced by organic curriculum maps, detailed unit plans that reflect the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and shifts across grades. This year the school's focus is on modifying the literacy curriculum to include more nonfiction reading and informational writing units is evident across classrooms. The school offers project based learning experiences to all students through science units that align with the hands-on experiences in the hydroponic greenhouse. Middle school students self-select module learning focused on essential understanding and problem solving across the content areas. Units titled, "We the People", "Hydroponics", "Striking the Balance", "9/11", and "Developing West Africa" emphasize text-based discussion and text based evidence, academic vocabulary and interdisciplinary connections that culminate with an end project that sends students on a quest to solve a real life problem. As a result of the purposefully planned instruction aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), teachers are promoting critical thinking and college and career readiness on all grades.
 - Students are engaged in high-level tasks at the end of each unit that emphasize rigorous habits such as creating their own meaning, questioning and critiquing student work. All literacy units end with student publication that is self-assessed, peer assessed, as well by the teacher. Middle school students receive their feedback through an on-line program, I-learn, which allows real time communication across all constituents: parents, teachers, and students. In math, the students participate in a math congress where the students tackle a problem and move through the stages and have a consensus meeting, create a poster and conclude with a "Gallery Walk" where the students respond to or question their peers' solutions. In the modular learning unit "We the People" the students create a campaign as the end project. Most impressive is the school's TEDx Youth conference held in June where the students in grades 5 through 8 presented their work on the hydroponic greenhouse and urban sustainability to show their understanding of real world problems.
- The school's theory of action for culture building along with strategic initiatives of adult and student learning ensure an inclusive learning environment that promotes effective academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - The school is an inclusive environment where all students and families are welcome. Culture building, school rules and themes such as respecting differences and encouraging student voice are developed through the Responsive Classroom framework in grades Kindergarten

through grade 6 and Origins in grades 7 and 8. Students are involved in the decision making process through the Student Congress and have been integral in determining community service projects, extensions to the curriculum through the Harbor High school to develop the hydroponic unit and rewards for good citizenship. Students feel that it is “cool to do well in school.” One student reported, “I feel confident in myself and will try to do better and my future might be better.” Students express that their teachers do not give them the answers but challenge them and steer them in the right direction. Through the advisory period, middle school students are supported to ensure that they are doing their work, making progress and receive assistance in the high school application process. Students in the elementary school set goals using the “Hopes and Dreams” theme and middle school students create their social goals, declarations, and missions. As evidenced by an increase in all areas of the Learning Environment Survey, student voice is recognized and supports improving student progress and school improvement efforts.

- Key staff members attend off-site training in Responsive Classroom strategies and then turnkey the information to all teachers so that there is uniformity in developing and promoting effective behaviors throughout the school. In addition, advisory teachers attend a one-week intensive training during the summer to acquire tools and strategies to develop their skills on talking to middle school students and dealing with concerns and issues. The administration has been conducting frequent walk-throughs and providing actionable feedback to create an environment that is conducive to learning. Teachers visit their colleagues’ classrooms to observe and learn best practices in building community. The beginning of the year’s focus on the Danielson framework, component 2b: establishing a culture for learning, paid particular attention to new teachers’ classrooms. Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits for Happy Kids* and *Seven Habits for Effective Teens* have been presented to faculty, students, and community to support the practices used in responsive classroom and Origins. As a result, teachers convey the high expectations internalized by the students and community. Additionally, parents participate in a book club on *Pathways to Common Core*, they participate in the school-wide congress, as well as have “Coffee with Susan” to learn about the expectations and programs in the school. A family event to watch the movie *Race to Nowhere* stemmed from the school leadership team and engaged participants in a discussion on the role of homework at the Manhattan School for Children. As a result of the aligned professional development and family outreach, all members of the school community reflect a genuine respect for each other resulting in effective academic and personal behaviors.
- The administrative team effectively uses the information gathered from frequent observations of lessons using a research based framework and reflection on student work to support professional growth that improves teaching and learning. (4.1)
 - The administrative staff frequently observe teachers and provides verbal and written feedback about the questioning, discussion techniques, and student engagement, based on low inference observations aligned with the Danielson rubric. Teachers review the transcript from the lesson and respond to post reflection questions after the observed lesson. Written feedback is targeted to teacher’s individual needs and experience. New

teachers focus on 2b: creating a culture for learning and 1e: designing coherent instruction. More experienced teachers' observations focus on 3b: using questioning and discussion techniques and integrating Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions into the lessons. Professional goals are set as a result of self-reflection and through continued dialogue with the administration. Teachers refer to the Danielson rubric and the environmental checklist to identify their next steps for further development. Through the regular observation cycle, the assistant principal recognized that a new teacher needed additional assistance in planning and preparation. Therefore, the teacher received strategic support from the administrator as well as the staff developer and teacher mentor in planning through the workshop model using varied materials. Another teacher needed additional support on incorporating discussion techniques and the administrator provided assistance in developing student partnerships and incorporating DOK prompts in the lesson plan. Teachers feel supported by the administration and their colleagues, are comfortable to observe each other, and collaborate to improve their practice. As a result of explicit guidance to teachers about their practice, teachers have clear expectations to support their development and improve their pedagogy particularly in the area of teachers' use of questioning techniques as evidenced by classroom visits and observation reports.

- Inquiry based teacher collaborations align to school goals and promote distributive leadership, resulting in increased instructional capacity and teacher voice in key decision-making. (4.2)
 - All teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based collaborations around the CCLS. Teachers on a grade meet two to three times a week in addition to the Inquiry meeting held on Thursday afternoons. Through a school-based option, once a month there is a half-day on Fridays to provide additional opportunity for professional collaborations. The school has developed vertical teams for math, literacy, and arts. These teams are supported by the partnerships with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, Math in the City, and Lincoln Center Institute. The teachers meet to analyze student work and assess the work using a school-wide adapted rubric. Teachers use this collaborative practice to identify trends across the grade as well as vertically. Teachers state that as a result of the inquiry process, there has been an improvement in their teaching practices and they have collaborated on developing a rubric and determining student strength, weaknesses, and next steps. Through the CCLS integration there has been greater emphasis on using the DOK questioning in their lessons, increase in reading expository text and students' use of text-based evidence to support their arguments and development of academic vocabulary in all subject areas. As a result, classroom pedagogy reflects effective use of depth of knowledge.
 - Through the inquiry process and professional collaborations teachers have a voice in key decisions such as the alignment and sequence of units particularly in literacy and math based on students' needs, the ordering of materials to support the curricula, refining CCLS performance tasks, and modifying instruction. Staff developers support teams, administrators, and teachers feel empowered to make decisions to affect student learning. They have developed their leadership capacity through curriculum development, sharing best practices with their colleagues and

opening their classrooms for intervisitations. Teachers feel that the school community values their input to ensure that they are teaching in a manner, “that makes sense for kids.” As a result, teachers input in the sequence of units and development of academic vocabulary particularly in math have improved computational fluency and math problem solving for students across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine instructional practices to incorporate strategically purposeful entry points to learning so that all students demonstrate high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership. (1.2)
 - The common belief that students learn best through the gradual release of responsibility, small group instruction, use of high level questioning, conferences, and routines that support student independence is consistent throughout the school as evidenced by practices implemented in the workshop model. However, the degree of strategic questioning and scaffolds varied across classrooms. In one class there were many supports and scaffolds including occupational therapists working with students to solve math problems using unifix cubes and a dry erase board, another group of students had a number line in their notebook to support them in the problem solving and the rest of the class responded verbally referring to the number line on the Smart board. In another class, supports included placing the essential question and vocabulary in the middle of the table for each group but certain groups of students were struggling in the midst of the task. Thus, in the absence of strategic scaffolds that lead to student ownership, some students’ needs are not met.
- Strengthen teacher assessment practices to use varied checks of understanding and adjust instructional decisions so that all students demonstrate increased mastery. (2.2)
 - The school has a portfolio of common assessments including Fountas and Pinnell, Acuity, benchmark writing assignments, and the pre- and post-performance tasks. Teacher teams consistently use the assessments to modify their practices. However, some of the common assessments have yet to be modified to create a clear picture of student progress particularly regarding the CIE instructional shifts in nonfiction. For example there is a gap in the use of running records, one of the common assessments, which tracks student progress in reading as it is more biased towards fiction texts, thus minimizing the ability to track progress and make adjustments so that all students are demonstrating increased mastery relative to the CCLS.
 - Across classrooms, teachers confer with students on an ongoing basis and as a result teachers make necessary adjustments into subsequent lessons, however not all students are aware of their next learning steps in that lesson. Students are self-assessing their work using the rubrics but the teacher does not regularly monitor it. Consequently, teachers’ assessment practices do not reflect varied forms of ongoing checks for

understanding, minimizing efforts to ensure that all students know how they are doing and are aware of their next learning steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 333 Manhattan School for Children	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