

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Cynthia Jenkins Elementary School

Elementary School Q037

179-37 137th Avenue

Queens

NY 11434

Principal: Beverly Mitchell

Dates of review: March 18 – 19, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Cynthia Jenkins is an elementary school with 577 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 91% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has established very effective systems for monitoring teaching practice with a clear focus on improving instruction, thereby creating precise and targeted pedagogical support for better student performance. (4.1)
 - The school leadership is enthusiastically engaged in a pilot program using a Teacher Effectiveness Plan based on the Danielson framework. The administrative supervisors have engaged in a minimum of 6 informal observations and one formal observation of each teacher during the first half of the school year. Using a precise rubric, they provided each teacher with oral and written feedback that speaks to their individualized needs. This information was also logged in ARIS and tracked weekly and monthly. The school leadership invited the teachers to use the rubric to grade their own teaching performance and calibrated with them using low inference data. Teachers wrote and refined their own professional goals at the beginning of the school year in September. The principal and assistant principal then coached into the lessons of each classroom teacher while explaining what effective teaching looks and sounds like, modeling for their staff and clarifying expectations. Teachers engaged in peer observations within their own grades using the same four point Danielson rubric. Lesson planning and student work products are a crucial part of this ongoing professional exercise. Consequently, teacher practice developed in targeted, effective ways and resulted in improved student formative assessment results including running records and Acuity in both English language arts and mathematics compared to a baseline assessment administered in the first part of the school year.
 - The school leadership uses the data from its extensive observations to create its own professional development models. For example, at the beginning of the year teacher lesson plans were vague and incomplete. After two cycles of observations and subsequent coaching, teachers' plans now include essential questions, suggested methods of demonstration, assessments and strategic student grouping, among other items. Questioning was another area requiring focused attention as was enhancing student engagement to include student to student discussion. The school leaders examined student notebooks, students' edited essays, student assignments and CCLS tasks. The agreed-upon rubrics at the school are indicating steady growth among students across grades and classrooms. This has enabled the school leadership to make informed, collaborative decisions with regard to teacher placement for the next school year and teacher tenure based on the student work products.
- Teachers benefit greatly from participation in strong professional collaborations that foster reflection and expand options for researching highly effective instructional techniques that improve student performance. (4.2)
 - The vast majority of teachers work willingly in collaborative teacher teams. These grade level teams have adapted Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks and assignments from the Common Core library, and utilized the instructional shifts to impact their daily lessons. Team

meeting agendas include looking at all aspects of their teaching practice, particularly as informed by the Danielson framework, and sharing strategies for improved delivery of instruction to their students. They have a shared, written protocol for looking at student work and are dedicated to mastery of student interim and long range goals. The school has a Teacher Effectiveness Program team (TEP) composed of volunteers that meets in addition to the regular weekly teacher team meetings to discuss and clarify best practices that could be shared across the school for immediate implementation. Teachers' former practice was to write lesson plans in brief outline form. The TEP team looked at a range of lesson plans and realized their inadequacy in helping both the teacher and the supervisor bring precision to lessons. They devised and disseminated a series of guidelines which increased the effectiveness of planning. This intense effort has led to continuous improvement of students including English language learners and students with disabilities in meeting their goals as measured by benchmark assessments administered every 6 weeks.

- School leaders and faculty align curricula to State standards that effectively engage all learners in CCLS units of study, including the citywide instructional shifts that result in increased student achievement. (1.1)
 - Individual teachers have a comprehensive understanding of CCLS as evidenced in their units of study, curricula goals, unit assessments and instructional topics. In literacy the units focus on writing to inform, explain and persuade as well as close reading and comprehension of texts. In math, the units focus heavily on computational fluency and developing students' ability to solve multi-step word problems. Teachers require students to explain how they solve problems rather than simply obtaining the correct answers. In a third grade class; for example, students explained their answers using the interactive whiteboard. Their peers asked questions with facilitation by the teacher. This approach has led to a minimum of 11 percent improvement on periodic assessments in grades 3 through 5 over 5 months.
 - When teachers and faculty analyzed students' performance at the end of the last school year, they recognized a need to improve math vocabulary and comprehension, particularly for students with disabilities and English language learners. The teachers, with the help of network specialists, re-organize the curriculum continuously to emphasize fewer topics and explore them more deeply. They demand increased writing from their students tied to texts they have read on assignment or studied in class. English language learners are required to "turn and talk" to their peers in every lesson observed. This approach has led to increased student engagement by 10 percent from the previous year as seen in the number of students contributing to classroom discussions (measured in low inference observations) and completing their assignments.
- Teachers effectively use common assessments aligned to the curriculum that result in a clear understanding of the performance of students, guide instructional decisions and inform planning. (2.2)
 - Network subject area specialists work with teams of teachers to create targeted assessments that mirror the type of essential questions

incorporated into the CCLS tasks. These tasks require the drawing of evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, research and inferences. Teachers then use the analysis of the students' constructed responses as a teaching tool and to make adjustments, such as increasing the rigor of questioning and the use of academic vocabulary and precise language. The students see exactly where they can improve their writing assignments by expanding on details and using appropriate vocabulary. For example, through data analysis the school discovered that students needed coaching in writing to inform, explain and persuade using coherent text-based reasoning. As a result, teachers adjusted their instruction to include greater amounts of non-fiction writing.

- Teachers use mid-workshop interruptions to consistently check the levels of understanding of their students. They circulate the room during assignments to monitor for themselves how each student progresses. For example, one third grade teacher taught her students to use written arrays to describe the relationship between multiplication and division sentences in fact families. A fifth grade teacher required her students to use math vocabulary to explain the solution to a problem as if they were explaining it to a second grader. Students across grades write reflections in their notebooks or use rubrics to grade themselves or their peers. Teachers read these reflections along with graded assignments and search for trends that directly inform their planning and future teaching. For example, the second grade teacher team noticed that students made calculation errors when counting money. They created lessons that addressed this need and could be taught using interactive technology. As a result, teachers make adjustments that lead to student improvement as measured by unit and end-of-chapter tests.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine teaching practices to ensure that teachers strategically provide multiple entry points so that lessons challenge all students and result in meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - There is a definite commitment among teachers to create and maintain a student-centered learning environment that is aligned to the Danielson framework and reflected in instructional practices. Teachers consistently make provision in their planning and practice for students with disabilities and English language learners. They teach the students to identify important and supportive ideas in every text they read. They focus in a precise way on effective questioning that stimulates thinking and in facilitating open discussions among students both during teaching and in flexible group work. Advanced students, however, report that they often find the work easy and effortless. As a result, lessons do not always challenge some of the students to their full potential and instruction does not always fully address learning needs, leading to missed opportunities for student improvement.
- Continue to maximize the utilization of all school resources to further build teacher capacity and improve instruction to increase student outcomes. (1.3)
 - In addition to scheduled weekly meetings across grades levels, teachers are self-directed and responsive to each other's requests for support and

feedback. The school consistently upgrades classroom libraries and utilized a grant to modernize the school library. The school has used grants from local political leaders to bring in technology upgrades in the form of laptops and interactive whiteboards. The school is aiming to improve student writing and math performance through critical thinking after careful analysis of its summative data. However, even though the school has created effective student groupings for students with disabilities and English language learners, the general education students are sometimes more than thirty to a single teacher. A special education teacher and English as a second language teacher are pushed into these classrooms to alleviate the student load. This has stretched the capacity of the manageable cohorts to the limit and impedes maximum capacity for growth as measured in student work products.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Cynthia Jenkins School	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