

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Samuel Huntington**

**Elementary School Q040  
109-20 Union Hall Street  
Queens  
NY 11433**

**Principal: Alison Branker**

**Dates of review: March 5 - 6, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Samuel Huntington is an elementary school with 551 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 72% Black, 18% Hispanic, 4% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.1%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations to parents through regular and open communication that positively impacts student achievement. (3.4)
  - Teachers were introduced to the Danielson competency of “Questioning and Discussion” through professional development, and then administration collected teacher lesson plans to identify questions used in lessons. Teachers rated those various questions as either high or low level questions, and those rated as low they then revised to become higher-level questions. Finally, administration conducted a “Questioning Scavenger Hunt” where, through an informal classroom walkthrough, they had to find effective questions during lesson implementation. Administration now requires teachers to infuse effective questions in their “Do Now” activity. As a result, there is a consistent message to teachers about the high expectations they have for the teachers, especially in regard to their role in assisting students to advance academically.
  - Parents expressed great satisfaction with how the school communicates its expectations for their children’s learning. The parents were happy to be invited to monthly Spirit Day assemblies where the month’s character traits are reviewed. They talked about the principal’s bi-monthly “Chat and Chew” that provides professional development for parents, gives them a forum to voice their concerns as it pertains to their child’s education and shares how parents can help to better the school. Professional development workshops for parents have included: helping prepare your child for the state exams, explaining the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Common Core shifts, sharing Positive Behavioral Incentives and Supports (PBIS) expectations for students in the school and family fitness. In addition, both literacy and math programs provide a parent feedback form that informs them of the unit being taught and their child’s results, as well as tips to help their child improve their academic skills at home. There is also a monthly parent newsletter that informs them of the units being taught in the core curriculum areas as well as suggestions to help their child at home with homework and tips for preparing their children to do better in reading and math. Parents each year receive a Family Handbook that not only includes basic school information but also descriptions of learning styles, homework tips for parents, a parent workshop schedule and information on the CCLS. As a result, there is a consistent and effective message to families about their role in assisting their children academically. This work is helping students to achieve more positive outcomes as evidenced by an increase in periodic assessment scores, as well as improved running records data.
- Professional collaboration is prioritized; staff profit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals, leaders and members of the larger community, resulting in improved student outcomes. (4.2)
  - Based on the results from the state exams, the inquiry focus this year for grade teams is Math and ELA. Teacher team members identify 3-5 Level

2 students who are close to becoming a Level 3, known as “pushables”, whom teachers focus on for the year. Teacher teams analyze various forms of data to create long and short term goals for skill mastery for their targeted student population. Student short term goals are constantly changed and revised until students achieve their long term goal. Teacher teams use their inquiry assessment tracker to record assessment data of all assessments the inquiry teams use to look at student trends. After reviewing the inquiry assessment tracker data, teacher teams modify their instruction to meet their students’ short term goals. By looking at student work to identify student needs, teachers learn strategies from their team members and collaborate to brainstorm ideas that would address the targeted student’s needs. For example, one teacher noticed that a student in her inquiry group was having problems in a particular mathematics task. Thanks to strategies suggested by a colleague on the inquiry team, the teacher implemented the strategy and the student is now able to do the task in various forms and has shown mastery in this area. Another teacher shared how there was a test on place value where the inquiry students previously did poorly and are now improving as a result of using concrete materials suggested by her inquiry team such as base ten blocks. These practices have helped to build a reflective, collaborative community that plans cohesively and shares best practices gained from inquiry team work in math and English language arts across the school to close student learning gaps. Unit exams from each inquiry student showed mastery in meeting their learning target.

- Every teacher on the grade team has a role. The Grade Facilitator creates the agenda and maintains the team binder and the Core Facilitator attends the core school inquiry meeting to report best practices gained through inquiry and take best practices that meeting to share with the grade. The Recording Secretary takes minutes for each meeting and serves as the timekeeper while the Researcher identifies articles focused on innovative ways to close the achievement gaps of the targeted students for the inquiry study. The Blogger uploads the meeting agenda and minutes on ARIS weekly and also enters best practices and strategies on ARIS once a month. Finally, the Inquiry Assessment Tracker updates the team’s inquiry tracker with the most current assessment data for the targeted students. This shared leadership has led the staff to establish a school-wide structure of identifying, targeting and assessing students to increase learning outcomes to be used consistently throughout the school. Many examples of effective school-wide changes grew from this teacher leadership such as increasing the use of graphic organizers, infusing idioms throughout all lessons and infusing academic vocabulary throughout different curricula.
- The school has established systems for monitoring teaching practice with a clear focus on improving instructional practices. (4.1)
  - Coaches support new teachers and those teachers who were identified as needing support from administration’s walkthroughs and formal observations. Within a six-week period, coaches observe, model, co-teach and conference with these teachers to review student work and data in order to formulate next steps for student improvement. Coaches also give weekly feedback and complete a coach log that describes each teacher’s strengths and areas for improvement. This process allows for a differentiated approach to assist teachers at various levels, thereby

creating targeted pedagogical supports for effective professional growth. For example, the literacy coach worked with a teacher in a grade 4 class by differentiating academic vocabulary strategies for her English language learners. With the coach's feedback, the teacher learned to infuse more visual aids and synonyms into her lessons and she slowed down her reading to make sure all students were able to follow effectively.

- As a result of a recommendation from the previous quality review that said to, "design a uniform protocol for walkthroughs and observations to provide a common lens that evaluates teaching practice and identifies next steps," administration has provided informal and formal feedback to teachers through observations and walkthroughs that are aligned to the Danielson's Framework as well to the school's goals. Administration created a staff calendar where the walkthrough focus is written for that particular month, and the leadership covers a particular competency every three months with the goal for teachers to be performing at an Effective/High Effective level. The principal sends feedback to teachers from her walkthroughs via email the same day that details what the teacher did well and what the teacher needs to improve. That email is also copied to the assistant principal who then meets with the teacher to offer further assistance and guidance. Consequently, they are able to make precise, timely teacher performance evaluations and provide specific feedback that informs the quality of the work and next steps to improve. From this practice of observations and short frequent walkthroughs administration is able to determine which teachers need additional support and which areas they need the support in, and then differentiated professional development is provided for these teachers. For example, data from walkthroughs and observations helped administration to create lab-sites for teachers used questioning effectively during classroom instruction.
- Administration and teachers use a wide range of assessment data to monitor school-level needs, student progress, plan instruction and create intervention strategies when needed. (2.2)
  - Teachers assess students regularly using common assessments such as unit exams, benchmark exams, periodic assessments and assessment checklists. The literacy and math coaches look at teachers' assessment data and provide feedback using the data analysis feedback form. Teachers then use this feedback to inform their action plans where teachers identify students' strengths and three areas of student growth as revealed on the post-tests. Teachers then form new small groups based on the data and create action plans for re-teaching where needed. Teachers also organize their overall class data from that test by sub-groups, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to differentiate instruction. As a result, teachers have created differentiated activities in their lesson plans in English language arts and math tailored to the specific needs of these sub-groups, and targeted activities have led to improved periodic assessment scores and an increase in running records levels from benchmark to benchmark.
  - The principal created a "Using Assessment in Instruction" checklist and distributed it to teachers to use as a quick, ongoing check for understanding. It is used during instruction so that teachers can record whether each student understands the opening activity, accountable talk

and the direct instruction questions. During the class teachers make appropriate notes on the checklist if students have mastered or need additional support with understanding of any of these key lesson elements. In addition, students engage in their own self-assessments by reviewing the rubric and student checklists given for particular lessons. These practices allows teachers to analyze student work and in-class participation to accurately assess each student's level of understanding.

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

- Develop coherence and alignment in the school's curriculum with the CCLS to ensure that all students make progress in their learning. (1.1)
  - Curriculum maps are based on the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and the instructional shifts of the CCLS. Pacing calendars show the priority skills on which each grade is to focus based on item skill analysis of various assessments. However, the school is not currently focusing on key standards from the CCLS. Consequently, it is unclear if the current strategies are setting a path towards mastery of rigorous skills and content for all groups of students.
  - Teachers administered a learning styles inventory at the beginning of the year as one method to plan multiple entry points in the curricula to accommodate the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. After analyzing student work and data at the end of each unit, teachers are supposed to make revisions to the units of instruction. However, the differentiation of assignments is not evident in other types of work given to those students and higher achievers are not sufficiently challenged. As a result, the individual learning needs of students are not consistently targeted, thereby hindering academic growth.
- Extend the practice of deepening instruction so that lessons reflect purposeful groups, students are challenged, tasks accommodate different learning styles and questioning extends thinking to promote student learning. (1.2)
  - There is a shared belief school-wide that links rigor with the use of the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) categories. Teacher teams use the DOK wheel to assess the level of tasks. They have also introduced Hess' matrix, which integrates Bloom's Cognitive Process dimensions with the DOK levels. However, in classes observed, there were limited examples of teachers deepening the level of instruction to provide appropriate challenge, especially to implement higher-level questioning. As a result, there are missed opportunities for teachers to facilitate higher-order thinking and extend learning experiences for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.
  - Individual teachers and teacher teams plan differentiated lessons using student data to guide their targeted adjustments. Although in virtually all classes observed there were students clustered for small group instruction, lessons did not consistently reflect differentiation of modalities or a wide range of learning opportunities, especially for higher functioning students. This hampers students' ability to fully participate in instruction, reducing engagement and the opportunity for all students to produce meaningful work products that demonstrate higher levels of thinking.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Samuel Huntington	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			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>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>