

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The School by the Sea

School designation Q043

**160 Beach 29 Street
Queens
NY 11691**

Principal: Gary Fairweather

**Dates of review: May 23-24, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School by the Sea is an elementary-middle school with 1,246 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 66% Black, 28% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 15% 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 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers effectively align curricular to key standards and provide a diverse groups of students with multiple learning opportunities that support their learning. (1.1)
 - The school created and uses its own curriculum maps. The maps include units of study in English language arts (ELA), and core subjects. The leadership and staff ensure that the maps align with the Common Core Standards, and the instructional shifts and performance tasks that are embedded in unit plans and are taken from the Common Core Library, and include a major focus on informational writing. Also reflected in the planning documents are essential questions, big ideas and relevant resources such as texts that are used to accompany each unit. As a result, teachers are sufficiently guided in lesson planning and know exactly what to teach, and students complete challenging performance tasks on topics such as natural disasters that promote academic achievement.
 - The school gives considerable attention to English language learners (ELL's) and students with disabilities (SWD) and curricula are routinely adjusted during teacher team meetings to reflect the needs of all students. Modifications needed to support students, such as computer software programs, are used to support individual and groups of students and reflected in planning documents and lesson plans. In a grade 4 dual language class, students are cognitively engaged as they investigate adaptations and the habits of animals such as fish, guinea pigs, spiders, and snakes all found in the classroom. Students discuss the role plants and animals play in the environment, and use laptops as a research tool in order to identify key sources of information. Consequently, all learners are customarily able to demonstrate and share their thinking and provide a rationale based on their own explorations as evident in discussions and work products.
- The principal makes informed and effective organizational decisions regarding resources and time to support instructional goals and the common core focus that improve student learning outcomes. (1.3)
 - The principal ensures that the goals of the school are constantly addressed during planning meetings with all constituents. For example, the school sustains after-school activities such as the Beacon program that support students in grades 3 through 8 in literacy and math. Beacon counselors provide individualized and small-group tutoring to students using the school's holiday instructional packets, which support the school's goals which are to improve student reading, writing and math in all grades. Non-fiction texts and technology software promote student engagement in challenging Common Core-aligned performance tasks that hang prominently on display across the school. Additionally, the principal's astute spending plan resulted in a decrease in teacher per diem funding from 116, 985.00 from the previous year to 36, 464.00 this school year. The savings enabled the school to purchase additional staff to support the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards

(CCLS). The principal hires full and part-time F-status teachers with literacy and math expertise to provide daily support to English language learners and students with disabilities. Teachers are programmed for weekly grade and vertical teams that support common planning based on the analysis of data, and the evaluation of student work. Teachers use their time productively to engage in item skill analysis based on benchmark test result to sufficiently group students during instruction. Furthermore, grade 4 teachers adjust their curricula to ensure the implementation of the instructional shifts, to reflect real world connections in math. As a result, the school's most recent New York State Report Card indicates that all sub-groups met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and all students receiving academic intervention support have improved in ELA.

- School leaders ensure that there is a cohesive system of assessments that provide relevant information about the needs, strengths and performance of students and make adjustments that meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - Teachers across the school routinely develop and utilize a range of summative and formative assessments such as Progress Reports, Quality Review, State Report Card data, Acuity, unit tests, Fountas and Pinnell, and benchmark assessments in math that align to the CCLS. Information gained from their analysis of these assessments is used to group students, and adjust curricular and lesson planning. For example, grade 3 teachers analyzed New York State Accountability data and saw that previously all groups other than African American made Annual Yearly progress. Therefore, teachers effectively provide small group and individualized instruction for students during the circular 6 periods. Consequently, grade 3 ELA Spring Acuity benchmark results indicate that students improved by 13%.
 - Teachers share with their colleagues relevant assessment documents in Google docs. Furthermore, teacher teams engage in the analysis of looking at student work using customized rubrics, and teacher comments highlighting next steps for students. For example, a grade 6 student shared that after reading the book, "Shoot for the Hoop", he wrote an essay and used a rubric to support him in his writing. He stated that after conferencing with his teacher, and analyzing his writing, he needs to include more details in his writing. The leadership and teachers comment how much they like the school's computer-generated instructional programs that enables them to sufficiently identify and address learning gaps in student performance. Trends in student math performance led to school-wide focus in math, based on students' lack of mathematical reasoning. The school adjusted its practice to include a school-wide policy of math problems of the week, that result in improved student performance for all learners as indicated in fall to spring math benchmark assessment results.
- The school has a structured system for observations that utilizes a common framework and facilitates effective feedback to teachers so that they may improve their professional growth. (4.1)
 - The school is a part of the Teacher Effectiveness Program (TEP) and utilizes the Danielson Framework which enables the entire staff to view

teacher practice from a common lens, and supports targeted professional development on topics such as questioning, and the CCLS instructional shifts. A very detailed observation tool is utilized by the principal and referred to by administrators during cabinet meetings, and ensures that all teachers receive ongoing classroom observations, and individualized support, such as modeling. Teachers, including those new to the school receive effective feedback that is reflected in short, frequent observations, informal and formal observations within twenty four hours of being observed. All feedback results in an email, verbal or written reports that provide the teacher with next steps for improvement, in areas such as coherent planning and assessment in instruction. In a case study compiled by the principal, a grade 3 teacher began the school year in the “developing” domains of the Danielson Framework, in areas such as establishing a culture for learning and engaging students in learning. By the end of the school year, the teacher’s observation reports reflect “effective” practices in each areas of the domain. In another example, a grade 3 teacher receives targeted professional development, and ongoing discussion about teacher improvement, and effective assistance from the coach. Hence, the teacher’s class summary reports from Acuity’s Fall Benchmark assessment indicate that in ELA, students improved 14% points from fall to spring, and in math, students in this same time period improved 19% points. As a result of these efforts, teachers are making progress along the Danielson continuum.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen instructional practice across the school so that lessons are planned to reflect intentional scaffolds and extensions in order to increase student engagement and higher-order thinking. (1.2)
 - Teacher teams utilize protocols to evaluate student work, engage in the analysis of school and class level student data and make adjustments to their curricular that promote student learning outcomes in literacy and math. All classrooms reflect small student groupings and tasks for the various groups are differentiated in most classrooms. For example, in a grade 7 special needs class, the teacher instructs the class using the workshop model, and students respond to effective questions. The 3 paraprofessionals in the class guide students in a small group activity based on how an author develops and contrasts points of view of different characters or narrators in a text. Students participate in discussion with each other, and leveled readers are well matched to support each student’s level. However, across the school there are inconsistencies in the manner in which lessons are scaffolded and reflect purposeful planning for each student’s entry point, including English language learners and students with disabilities and reveal higher-order thinking across all classrooms. Additionally, while most classrooms echo the school’s belief about assessment practices, and the strategy of turn and talk, exit slips and checklists are evident in some classrooms, the practice is still developing. Thus, students across the school do not sufficiently self-assess their learning and deepen their learning, resulting in limited innovation, and uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

- Enhance processes to purposefully evaluate and adjust curriculum, instructional and organizational practices to meet the learning needs of students and the expectations of CCLS. (5.1)
 - School leaders have a process in place where they engage in weekly cabinet, and lead teacher meetings to discuss the quality of their instructional and organizational practices. There are ongoing conversations about adjusting curricula to include the instructional shifts and increased focus on information reading and writing that take place at team meetings, cabinet and lead teacher meetings. Furthermore, school leaders engage in routine discussions regarding the work of teacher teams and evaluate teams' work that has been placed in Google docs. Their practices have led to the purchase of additional standards-based materials, such as informational texts, and technology that support student mastery of the CCLS. School leaders and teacher teams effectively evaluate their performance tasks to ensure sufficient challenge for students across the grades. However, while their analysis of instructional and organizational practices focuses primarily on the expectations of the Common Core Standards, the school lacks in purposefully addressing the need to strengthen higher-order thinking skills to fully support the augmented movement in CCLS. Thus, there is a void in instructional practice regarding coherence between what is taught and the manner in which it is taught in all lessons across the school to further support all learners' higher order thinking and academic growth.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The School by the Sea	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