

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The Seneca School 24Q088**

**Elementary School 88  
60-85 Catalpa Avenue  
Ridgewood  
NY 11385**

**Principal: Dave Bishop**

**Dates of review: February 28- March 1, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

24Q88 is an elementary school with 1087 student from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 54% Hispanic, 36% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 18% 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 93.0%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Decisions are made to align resources and teacher assignments, with the goals of the school in order to provide students with learning experiences to help advance their progress. (1.3)
  - After an analysis of the school's Progress Report grades, financial resources were utilized to maintain an academic instructional specialist in math in support of increasing the instructional acumen of students. Students were assessed and then determinations were made regarding criteria for the math intervention program. Based on the pre- and post Grade 5 Fall Benchmark, 45% of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students advanced in the areas of number operations and fluency of knowledge of multiplication facts. In addition, one of the instructional goals for this school year is to increase intercultural communication; therefore, English as a second language (ESL) class was developed for parents and their children. Although the program is fairly new, increased communication and involvement on the part of the parents and a greater awareness of what their children are learning is in evidence. Additionally, a cluster of classes are involved in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum *Learning through the Arts* program, where students visit the museum as well as receive art instruction by an artist in residence, who visits the school to provide students with instruction in the Arts. The program has helped to strengthen art appreciation through literacy and has guided student reflection. As a result of this program, students' work has been published in the Guggenheim Portfolio for Design and is starting to help students increase their progress in reading by being able to find details in a text relevant to questions being asked and documented in writing assignments.
  - Teacher growth reports were used to determine teacher placement in areas of students' greatest needs and staff expertise. Based on changes in teacher assignments this school year, results in school assessments have shown that upper grade student with disabilities (SWDs) are starting to show some improvements in their reading comprehension and math fluency in comparison to their State scores last year. Additionally, three teachers piloted a departmentalized approach to teaching reading and math. Students who are streaming to other classrooms have shown improvements in their comprehension and re-telling skills and have increased their reading levels by 25% as measured by pre and post tests and baseline assessment, since September.
- Teachers use assessments that are aligned to the curriculum to guide instructional decisions and inform planning in order to establish a clear understanding of the performance of students. (2.2)
  - Grade specific, teacher-made rubrics for writing are utilized school wide, as are pre and post unit assessments, specifically aligned to the curriculum and school goals. In addition, teachers provide feedback to

students resulting in next steps for their writing goals. The feedback is a result of conference notes that are developed through student meetings based on skill sets. Students in upper grades believe the individual feedback they receive from teachers have enabled them to modify their writing goals so that they reach proficiency levels or above on each task.

- Individual student reflection and peer to peer assessments are a built in component of each writing assignment and provide insightful information into students' understanding of writing units of study. In addition, across classrooms, teachers consistently conduct ongoing student assessment during lessons. For example, student conferences and running records, although measured differently, are observable in most classrooms as a measure of assessment. As a result, upper grade SWDs and kindergarten students have shown a 20-45% increase in writing with details and forming opinions to support their conclusions.
- The school promotes a safe environment that supports collaborative relationships, good attendance and appropriate behavior which enables students to focus on practices towards their progress. (1.4)
  - Although there are over one thousand students attending this school, the overall tone of the building is one of a close knit family boasting a helpful, kind and genuinely friendly atmosphere. Students are very aware of how hard the staff works to make sure they are well cared for and comfortable in the learning settings that have been established. One student stated and others agreed that being in school is just like being at home because no one will let them stop trying to be the best they can be. Students enjoy writing articles about school happenings in the school newspaper, *The Seneca Scoop*. Students were asked to design posters to deter bullying and Teachers were asked to vote and select the posters that best highlighted the essence of the theme. The four students who won agreed that the experience gave them a chance to voice their opinions about the subject and be creative in surfacing their messages against bullying to their peers. In addition, teachers feel empowered to make instructional decisions, modifications and requests that are well received by the administration. As a result, both students and adults feel welcome and safe in an inclusive and respectful environment.
  - Bulletin boards that highlight *Perfect Attendance* and *Student of the Month* acknowledge and support student efforts. The school's guidance team offers support to all students on a case-by case basis, as well as in the classroom and in small group sessions out of the classroom. Through the *Respect for All* initiative, they recently designed an anti-bullying campaign with the help of the school's Parent Teacher Association. This activity, in addition to student videos and students' published plays on equally challenging issues have guided their social emotional learning and supported their diversified learning needs.

## What the school needs to improve

- Increase the rigor of tasks across curricular to engage students in higher order thinking skills and identify key standards aligned to the State standards to improve all students' academic achievement. (1.1)
  - Upper grade inquiry teams created a writing curriculum which incorporates the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Citywide Instructional Expectations aligning a response to literature based on how students express ideas regarding fiction and non-fiction text. Essential concepts and skills such as writing responses to various texts in the form of paragraphs that include at least three supporting details and opinions about the text are evident in the curriculum plan. Although some of these elements are in place, in the writing curriculum, purposeful decisions regarding the identification of key standards for a school wide focus across all subject areas are not yet transparent. Thus, the lack of targeted key standards integrated across all curricula, impacts students' achievement skills in preparation for college and career readiness.
  - Teachers have worked hard to design some curriculum maps that are aligned to the standards and responsive in indicating the instructional shifts in literacy. However, at this time modifications to support the needs of students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELLs) are not fully established across grades, subjects and specialty classrooms. In addition, academic tasks do not always incorporate critical thinking processes such as Webb's Depth of Knowledge schema; to continually engage all students in nurturing and challenging cognitive thinking skills as a platform to ask meta-cognitive questions during lesson talks. Students have difficulty making connections to real life situations in alignment with lesson rationales as evidenced in discussions and assigned tasks. Consequently, in the absence of rigorous activities, not all students, specifically ELLs and SWDs, are consistently pushed academically to develop critical thinking skills, in order to close the achievement gap.
- Deepen teachers' knowledge of effective teaching strategies so that they provide engaging and differentiated lessons, aligned to how students learn best, that lead to higher levels of student work. (1.2)
  - Across classrooms, teachers are using data they have collected through formal and informal assessments to create student groups. However, multiple entry points are inconsistently connected to the tasks with a rationale regarding students' needs and the curriculum is not routinely challenging to a variety of learners. For example, in most classrooms students are working in groups on the same assignment using text books and worksheets. Evidence of performance based activities is not present at this time. In addition, not all students are actively engaged in the lessons and instruction lacks consistency in strategies to support high levels of student thinking with inquisitive questions and overall active student participation. As a result of the inconsistent use of tasks aligned to students' learning levels and the inconsistent use of teaching strategies to spark students' thinking,

including ELLs and SWDs, there are limited opportunities for all learners to demonstrate academic growth. Consequently, only 24.7% of last year's ELLs were at the 75<sup>th</sup> growth percentile or above in English.

- The school has a large Hispanic population and believes that their students learn best when they are exposed to material that coincides with students' appropriate reading levels and supported with visual learning tasks. Teams are beginning to align this belief into the curricula. The teams have turn-keyed some practices that they find are working with their students. Individual alphabet word walls help lower grade students and English language learners (ELLs) to establish a better foundation of academic vocabulary and write with more detail and creativity. At this time, however, not all teachers are consistently using teaching strategies aligned to how their students learn most effectively to improve student comprehension, writing and math fluency, thus creating a disengagement of students' understanding and forfeited instructional opportunities to build academic growth for all students.
- Deepen the instructional reflection and consistency of observation feedback aligned to student data and best practices, in order to support professional growth toward next steps. (4.1)
  - Although school leaders developed cycles of observations identifying competencies including developing a coherent curriculum, school culture and questioning strategies, during classroom visits evidence of these competencies were seen in a few classroom settings indicating feedback is limited in its effectiveness. Teachers are not sure which feedback has been most helpful as it is not measurable or timely. Furthermore, the feedback does not show alignment to improvements in students' work. As a result, the inconsistent alignment of feedback to identified competencies and student work makes it difficult to support teachers' professional growth towards their next steps.
  - The school is beginning to use limited observation data to inform professional development. Although assistance has been arranged for some targeted staff members, concrete feedback, individualized support, measurable expectations and impact of the professional supports are inconsistent. In addition, the school has not yet developed a professional development plan which offers learning opportunities that are differentiated to meet the professional needs of all teachers. Consequently, teachers have limited prospects for collaboration in order to address their specific professional goals and as a result of infrequent classroom observations, the administration lacks a sufficient data base to inform decision making around teacher assignment and tenure.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Seneca School 24Q088	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>