

# **Quality Review Report 2012-2013**

**Christa McAuliffe School**

**Elementary School Q149**

**93-11 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

**Queens**

**NY 11372**

**Principal: Esther Salorio**

**Dates of review: April 4-5, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Christa McAuliffe School is an elementary school with 1208 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 85% Hispanic, 5% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 41% English language learners and 7% 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 96.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and benefit from the effective level of support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - One of the school's goals is to continue to cultivate an inclusive environment where all students develop their personal growth, academic skills, strengths, interests and talents. To ensure that the students feel safe and comfortable and know they always have someone to talk to, the administration, teachers and parents collaborate to create a nurturing environment for all students. For example, in response to requests made by the student government, school leaders and teachers created a Respect for All pledge which focuses on respect, caring and citizenship. As part of this school-wide activity, classes received a poster size copy of the pledge which they signed and displayed throughout the school. During Respect for All week, a different thought provoking quote was highlighted daily. Two activities included students wearing hats to school and discussing "put a cap on name calling!" and students wearing two different shoes and discussing, "walking in another's shoes can be difficult and eye opening." Such events ensure students' social emotional well being and results in a safe environment and inclusive culture that enhance progress toward the school's goals. The school has the distinction of being named one of the city's twenty-five Respect for All Schools. Consequently, parents and staff state that through these school-wide activities, their children continuously demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of others.
  - The school attendance team consists of the principal, assistant principal, parent coordinator, guidance counselors and pupil accounting secretary. Monthly meetings coordinate outreach and supports that align with the needs of families and students. Parents meet with the counselors to discuss their children's academic and social development. The counselors closely monitor attendance on a weekly basis and maintain logs documenting all outreach and interventions. The school provides monthly incentives such as a bulletin board displaying an attendance honor roll "I'm cool, I come to school" and early morning clubs such as gym, drama and music encourage on-time arrival every day. By focusing on the needs and interests of the students, an overall increase in attendance from 95.8% to 96.2% has occurred.
- Professional collaborations are a high priority and teachers profit from researching effective instructional techniques that promote student progress. (4.2)
  - Every teacher is on a team that engages in collaborative inquiry work, closely monitors students' progress and evaluates the effectiveness of teaching practices on student outcomes. The work aligns to the overall school's goal to cover fewer topics in math and allows more time for students to develop a true and deep understanding of the content. The Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) are embedded in each unit of

study across grades and subjects thereby strengthening instructional coherence across the school. For example, the fourth grade team created a nine week multiplication and division unit requiring students to solve multi-step, multi-operational problems. They specifically focused on modeling with mathematics, constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others. Next, they studied the Common Core Standards and developed key, big idea concepts to incorporate within the unit. In addition, they studied the third grade standards to bridge the knowledge students achieved from the third grade, what they would be learning and the expectations for success in the fourth grade. Based on this alignment, multiple points of access in lesson planning and implementation facilitates comprehension through strategies that include, virtual base ten blocks, on-line multiplication dictionaries, academic multiplication word problem, organizers, flexible pairing of students according to needs and abilities, visual cues and the provision of prompts. After teacher-created units were taught, the fourth grade teacher team analyzed data from the problem solving section and noted a 28% increase in student's problem solving abilities based on the end of unit assessments.

- Several teachers participate in teacher leadership programs that are grounded in the citywide instructional expectations. In addition, some teachers are enrolled in administrative leadership programs with Fordham University and St. John's University, thus affording the school the opportunity to work in partnership with various institutions of higher learning to support teacher development and future leadership throughout the school. As a result, these teachers receive training and have the tools to support teacher teams in learning through professional texts, looking at teacher and student work, participating in low inference classroom visits and creating professional learning communities focused on increasing student achievement. Teacher teams contribute to decisions pertaining to the CCLS performance tasks. As a result, teachers indicate that they are invested in their work and enjoy their leadership roles which contribute to student learning across the school. Consequently, student trend identification and academic progress have improved as noted in the positive results of post-assessment CCLS performance task results.
- The school conveys high expectations that promote parent involvement and support learning so that staff, students and families work together toward achieving student and school goals. (3.4)
  - School leaders use Danielson's framework to communicate high expectations related to designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques, and designing assessments in instruction. Teachers benefit from professional development on the specific language of these components of the framework. These training sessions ensure teachers delve deeper into the rubric, thereby strengthening a common language and providing a multi-layered understanding of what quality teaching looks like. As a result, instruction is more focused in that expectations for classroom practice are now clearly defined and consistently practiced through the use of this framework for teaching. In addition, classroom visits and conversations with teachers demonstrate ongoing collegiality and mutual accountability towards ensuring a strong culture for learning.

- The school's strong systems to communicate expectations to families is linked to a path for college and career readiness to effectively support their children's progress. The school leadership teams play an essential role in the collection of data from families and staff in the form of surveys, wish lists and an adopt a class program. This data ensures the school evaluates the level of understanding and needs of the entire community. Based on this information, teacher teams identified grade level exemplars produced by students at each performance level showing vertical alignment from one grade to next and specifically linked to the expectations of the CCLS. These exemplars were shared with all stakeholders including students and parents. A bulletin board displaying the ladder of progression (College and Career readiness) through the grades is showcased upon entering the school building. In addition, the Comprehensive Education Plan's (CEP) school-wide goals depicting this ladder and the expectations of the CCLS was shared and mailed home to families. These artifacts provide parents with information, supplementary resources and websites that reinforce grade specific skills and strategies to ensure the progress of their children toward meeting the expectations. This has resulted in more parents working closely with school staff to accomplish the CEP school-wide goals.
- School leaders set clear focused goals and effectively communicates the school's improvement efforts resulting in a shared commitment to promote student learning. (3.1)
  - The school monitors and revises CEP and teacher team goals at School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings, collaborative inquiry sessions and grade conferences to ensure students' academic and personal growth. The school's goal to foster social emotional growth is reinforced through collaborative activities such as The Mitten Tree. This school-wide effort involves all members of the school community in contributing gloves, mittens, hats and scarves as tree decorations which were later donated to Hurricane Sandy victims in a school in the Rockaways. Families and students commented on how such activities continuously elevate students' sensitivity toward the needs of others. The school's CEP goals are also closely linked to accelerate student learning. For example, one of the grade specific goals calls for a 20% increase of first grade students meeting independent grade level benchmarks by the end of the school year. Detailed action plans include the implementation of a balanced literacy curriculum with daily shared reading, read aloud and word study sessions for students. The literacy coach, in collaboration with teacher teams, use common core aligned book lists, running records and book logs to track the progress of students. They incorporate instructional strategies and scaffolds such as high frequency word lists, spelling bee challenges and accountable talk prompts for partnership discussions to address identified gaps in their teaching and in student learning. As a result, first grade students are well on their way toward meeting the academic target goal, according to running record results, as noted in an increase of 15% for grade one students meeting set benchmarks.
  - The mission and vision of the school is at the center of the instructional planning. Evidence of integrating the CCLS into the school's curricula including the Citywide Instructional Expectation instructional shifts is noted in the artifacts that support curriculum plans and learning activities.

The school's premise to deepen the work in all content areas is strongly supported by all constituents as documented in the collaboratively designed CEP and the professional development plan generated from a data gleaned from a school-wide needs assessment. These plans are aligned to the school's goals, assessment data and teacher surveys. The work is warehoused on Edmodo, an on-line professional networking system which teachers use to share best practices. The use of this on-line resource has enhanced teacher practice as noted in classroom visits and observations, which reflect a significant improvement in the design and implementation of coherent lessons based on 90% of the lessons rated as effective and highly effective according to the framework. In addition, these activities contribute to closing the achievement gap in English language arts (ELA) as evidenced in a 3.62 additional credits on the Progress Report.

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

- Refine the use of strategic teaching strategies that embed multiple entry points in the curricula for all learners, including relevant subgroups that result in producing meaningful work products. (1.2)
  - Teachers across grades and subjects, plan lessons and use appropriate scaffolds to often provide multiple entry points into instruction in response to students' performance and interests, including those of English language learners and students with disabilities. Visits to classrooms indicate that technology is used across subjects, manipulative materials during math lessons and graphic organizers during English language arts (ELA) lessons provide entry into learning activities. However, lessons do not always challenge some students, particularly high performers, to their full potential, in that assignments do not strategically offer opportunities for them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills, extend their learning, or fully participate in thought provoking discussions, thus limiting these high performing students achieving greater outcomes.
- Strengthen teacher assessment practices to reflect effective feedback in order to make instructional adjustments and provide clear next learning steps to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
  - Student work is available in well organized folders in addition to the displays throughout the classrooms. It is also evident that teachers celebrate students' best efforts through checkmarks, stickers and written comments and use this information to inform instruction. Teacher teams and individual teachers use ELA and math item analysis information as well as Acuity predictive and interim assessment data to supplement summative data and identify student performance levels. Rubrics are used to assess student work and attached to writing pieces included in work folders and on bulletin boards. However, the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment to make immediate adjustments to lessons is not a fully embedded practice across the school. This limits the school's ability to pinpoint and address the special needs of student subgroups and modify targeted, differentiated interventions to accelerate learning. As a result, instructional strategies and learning tasks are not always strategically revised, hindering opportunities to meet the needs of all students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Christa McAuliffe School Q149	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<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?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?				<b>X</b>			
<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?			<b>X</b>				
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
<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>