

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**J.H.S. 194 William Carr**

**Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 25Q194**

**154-60 17 AVENUE  
QUEENS  
NY, 11357**

**Principal: Jennifer Miller**

**Dates of review: May 8, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

J.H.S. 194 William Carr is a junior high school with 1107 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 2% Black, 28% Hispanic, 39% White, and 31% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and staff are making informed curricula decisions and infusing key standards into units of study and tasks that support improved student learning habits and work products. (1.1)
  - This year, the administration and teacher teams meet weekly within and across grades levels in each content area to revise curriculum and build units of study and tasks that focus on key common core aligned standards and include the instructional shifts. There is clear evidence in student portfolios in English language arts, science and social studies of various genres of writing that include crafting viable arguments and using evidence from multiple sources to support claims. Teacher work around increasing text complexity and on grade content vocabulary skills within curriculum areas is present in all units of study. In order to address the decline in student progress in math, teachers in all grades have incorporated the *Carnegie Learning Math Series* to build better alignment to the standards. As such, they incorporate the mathematical shifts of obtaining new knowledge through solving real world math problems, constructing and interpreting mathematical models, expressing and explaining answers and using mathematical reasoning. Consequently, pre and post assessments and ACUITY data are demonstrating students are producing work that reflects college and career readiness skills as evidenced in student nonfiction text based writing and research samples and math task products.
  - The school's curricula and supporting tasks are developed with a focus on increasing students understanding and application of complex grade level concepts. For example, in a sixth grade social studies class, students were completing a task where they had to use evidence from primary source documents to conclude whether the United States government was an experiment started by the founding fathers or a proven product of ancient Rome. In a seventh grade science class, students were constructing models and defining causes that explored the effects of divergent plate boundaries, continental oceanic collisions and continent-continent collision. Student work products demonstrate implementation of these curricula and task expectations and exposure to a wide range of demanding experiences that address higher order thinking and are positively impacting students writing and reasoning skills in all grade and ability levels.
- The principal effectively utilizes resources and strategically structures staff and student time to support school wide instructional goals and the learning needs of students (1.3)
  - In order to build capacity and promote effective change, the principal has strategically utilized resources and formed new partnerships that are engaging students and support teaching and learning aligned to the school's instructional goals. For example, the school has increased purchases of technology for classroom use, including iPads and instructional programs, such as Achieve 3000, to provide interventions for struggling learners. *Teach Boost* was purchased to better monitor and aggregate teacher observation data in order to gauge instructional trends and plan for appropriate supports. Additionally, partnerships with organizations such as City Center, Teens for Jeans, Rachael's Challenge and NY Road Runners are helping students embrace

experiences outside of the classroom through writing in a variety of genres and content areas and students are gaining a better understanding of academic responsibility. As a result, the school has improved in their monitoring of student work and teacher practice trends to set more individualized instructional targets and successful partnerships are raising student expectations and commitment to their learning.

- Teacher time is structured to address the sense of urgency in improving teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. The principal's analysis of teacher qualifications has allowed for strategic programming, such as math/technology programs, to best utilize student time and offer more rigorous courses. For all teachers in the school, the twenty-fifth teaching period has been scheduled as weekly common planning time for teachers to meet by teams for students they share by content area or for professional development. Additionally, she has established a cross grade, cross content inquiry team that helps to drive the instructional agenda of the school and turn key goals and strategies using a "unified voice" to the staff. Teachers in all content areas have collaboratively developed units of study and assessments aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). As a result, they are sharing and developing effective pedagogical practices aligned to the instructional needs of the students they teach and are establishing effective ways to evaluate student work and gauge the implications of their practice to increase student outcomes.
- A focused instructional and social-emotional growth improvement vision and clear goals aligned to data, is communicated to the school community and are leveraging school wide change to improve student outcomes. (3.1)
  - As a new leader, the principal has engaged in a collaborative, high level needs assessment that includes a sophisticated data study of all aspects of the school organization, including State and in-house student assessments, teacher observation and scheduling data, and reports that focus on school climate. She has also developed surveys throughout the school year to gather feedback from all constituents around learning trends, goal setting, improving behavioral systems and community building. As a result of this work, the school has established a transparent school improvement plan that is clearly stated in the school's Comprehension Educational Plan (CEP), inquiry team minutes and professional development plans. These documents are displayed outside of the main office with supporting goals and actions to address meeting progress targets in all content areas, alignment of curricula to the Common Core learning standards (CCLS), improving communication and increasing the level of safety and respect throughout the building. This collaborative school vision has flourished and has set the school community on the path to improving student outcomes, raising academic standards and refining school tone. This is evidenced by changes in instructional practice to include infusion of content area vocabulary and increasing student voice through "turn and talk" strategies, improvements in student nonfiction writing and research skills, which are demonstrated in student portfolios and a reduction of negative incidents and suspensions across all grades within the school.
  - The principal effectively communicates school wide goals to all constituents. Parents, students and staff can articulate them and recognize the changes they see in academic expectations and school culture over the course of this school year. Additionally, she has formed

strong home school partnerships through the implementation of a monthly calendar of academic school events, curriculum night for parents and students, coffee and conversations that focus on Common Core topics, such as text complexity, higher level vocabulary expectations and exploring math through real world examples. Through the implementation of *Datacation*, parents can view at real time, work products and assessments of their children. As one parent said, "We are not there yet, but we all know where we are headed". Consequently, through the use of effective communication and engagement, all constituents are committed to meeting the goals of the school community.

## What the school needs to improve

- Improve consistency of teaching strategies and instructional decision making to provide purposeful entry points that will offer appropriate support and challenge to maximize student engagement. (1.2)
  - It is evident throughout classrooms that teachers are working to change their focus around the belief that teacher centered instruction is how children learn best and have begun to implement effective practices, such as use of data to drive instructional decision making, conducting ongoing checks to assess student understanding and supporting peer discussion and collaborative problem solving through project based learning. However, at this time, these strategies are not consistently embedded as effective pedagogical practices across all classrooms. While there are pockets of rigorous instruction in some classrooms that demonstrate planning around these key teaching strategies, for example in an eighth grade English language arts class, students were engaged in discussions evaluating their group debate writing to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information and in another Social Studies class, the teacher had students grouped according to student prior responses on exit slips. At the same time, there are also some classrooms that are teacher lecture dominated or where all students are asked to complete the same assignments in the same way. Consequently, the inconsistent use of effective teaching strategies school wide limits opportunities for all students to demonstrate knowledge and engage in deep higher order thinking through discussion and participation.
  - The school is making progress in its focus on engaging students by adapting lessons and providing entry points to assist students in gaining a better understanding of the curriculum. In some classrooms, examples of these practices are demonstrated in data based grouping routines and the use of a school wide graphic organizer around constructing and supporting evidence-based claims to build the cross curricular links of the school wide nonfiction writing units of study. However, many of the instructional supports planned within lessons are whole school shared approaches and teachers cannot yet fully articulate how multiple entry points, such as different leveled texts or pre designed questions are planned to address the learning needs and produce outcomes aligned to the needs of the individual students they teach. Although the staff recognizes the need to design tasks and implement teaching strategies that focus on meeting the needs of its highest achieving students, there is little evidence within task and lesson design to address the level of challenge necessary to improve outcomes for these students. As a

result, there are uneven levels of progress and student engagement aligned to the needs of specific students within and across grades and classrooms, thus limiting some students from working to their full potential.

- Develop the work of aligning assessment practices to key standards so teachers effectively gauge student learning and the impact of their curricular and instructional decisions so students are aware of their next steps. (2.2)
  - Included in the curricular design process that school leaders and faculty engaged in this year is the development of pre and post assessments and the implementation of common rubrics, aligned to units of study and tasks. Currently, teachers say they are using pre-assessments as an effective tool to group students during lessons within their units of study. However, at this time, individual teachers and teacher teams are not using these common assessments to measure student growth within the school's chosen standards, nor are they using information from end of unit tasks and student work products to assess gaps in instruction in order to make informed curricular decisions. As a result, current assessments practices are not fully informing teacher practice around adjusting curricular and instruction to address the learning needs of all students.
  - The school has developed assessment practices, such as step back questions and exit slips, to evaluate particular lessons and classroom projects and tasks that allow students to make general comments about the lesson or unit of study. However teachers do not currently provide feedback to students based on their responses to check for their comprehension of skills and content, nor are there consistent feedback practices within the school that provide students with an understanding of their learning needs and next steps. Additionally, teachers are not using information culled from these checks for understanding to make adjustments to instruction. Although school wide rubrics are used to grade student work, many students are not aware of the effective ways to use them in order to set goals and they are not able to articulate the next steps or skills necessary to progress to their next level. As a result, there are missed opportunities to adjust instruction to improve student understanding in order to increase learning outcomes.
- Build on feedback strategies to ensure next steps are supported by a system aligned to professional development needs, in order to further a culture of professional growth and teacher reflection. (4.1 )
  - School leaders provide clear and frequent observation and feedback systems and are building capacity in the alignment of classroom observation comments that highlight commendable pedagogy and next steps within the Danielson framework. Feedback from many frequent cycles of formal observations includes recommended resources, such as articles, daily planning guides and on line references to support teacher growth. However, the administration is still in the process of developing ways to design, implement and support professional development plans aligned to observation data that target individual teacher growth and school wide teacher goal setting practices, which address identified areas of weakness. As a result, the lack of an articulated system to analyze school wide classroom observation data to inform professional needs, lessens effective decision making in the design of professional development plans that promote professional growth ,teacher engagement and reflection of their pedagogy, thus

impacting improvements in student achievement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: J.H.S. 194 William Carr	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		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 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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed