

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Ocean School

Q197

**825 Hicksville Road
Queens
NY 11691**

Principal: Christina Villavicencio

**Dates of review: March 7- 8, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Ocean School is an elementary school with 513 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 54% Black, 38% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school community willfully acknowledges that the school is a safe and respectful environment that addresses the personal and developmental needs of students. 1.4
 - School leaders and staff conscientiously work to promote a safe school environment that is focused on achieving academic success for all students. The principal's coherent approach to culture building is rooted in the implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support program (PBIS). Students engage in a morning affirmation, which is based on a positive saying taken from the Core Knowledge program. They are acknowledged during "Student of the Month" and PBIS assembly programs. Adults use "apple dollars" to promote and reinforce positive student behavior, and students enjoy making purchases at the Apple Dollar school store. Across classrooms, teachers engage students in group activities that foster positive social engagement and improve adult and student relationships across the school. Students are included in key school decision making, such as in the development of a student behavior matrix that now includes suggestions from students regarding student expectations on the playground. Consequently, parents comment on the positive and respectful tone the school has achieved, and show support for the work that the principal and her staff are doing to improve the social and emotional development of their children.
 - Students identify administration and teachers as adults they go to when they require support and assistance. They say that they enjoy coming to school and share that they know that they are supported by their teachers. Teachers engage students in one-to-one discussion regarding their work during teacher-student conferences, which further support students in having positive school experiences. In addition, teachers and the guidance counselor provide students with social supports on dealing with bullying and strategies on how to resolve conflicts. The school also monitors students' attendance on a daily basis, with phone calls home and follow ups on consecutive absences and lateness. Thus, attendance data is currently at 92.9% compared to 91.4% the same time last school year. Together, these interventions support students' personal and academic learning needs in a safe environment.
- The dedicated principal consistently articulates high expectations to all constituents so that the school community shares the clear vision to accelerate student learning. 3.1
 - The leadership uses its careful analysis of previous evaluative reports, such as the Progress Report, the School Quality Review, and the Learning Environment Survey (LES) to develop well defined long-term goals that align with the reading comprehension and math needs of all students, including performance. The principal's goals are delineated in key planning documents such as the Principal Performance Review, and the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). Her vision for attaining the

goals is consistently shared during various venues such as faculty conferences, parent forums, and during monthly principal and Children First Network representative session time with parents, called, *'Let's talk about it'*. The principal maintains an open door policy, and school planners are customized to inform the community about the goals. Planning documents have created a collective understanding about the direction of the school, and encourage constituent buy-in. Teachers use their understanding of the goals to develop lesson plans, and analyze assessments to ensure students make progress. The PBIS program has been significant in ensuring that the entire school community is involved in the school's improvement process and has resulted in improved student performance and behavior in all grades. Additionally, based on Fountas and Pinnell's school wide benchmark data, from November 2012 to January 2013 there is an 8% increase in the number of students reading at or above the grade.

- The school has a structured system for the observation of classrooms that utilizes a common framework and facilitates effective feedback to teachers that results in improved professional growth. 4.1
 - The school implements the Danielson framework, with a focus on questioning, coherent planning and assessments. School leaders have crafted a tiered system of support for teachers based on the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. All teachers receive support; however, teachers in the lowest tiers receive direct, focused and continuous support, which include intervisitations, modeling by coaches in areas such as the workshop model, and one-to-one conferences with the leadership. Short frequent observations conducted weekly; provide immediate and effective feedback that supports the goals of the school, and the individualized needs of teachers. Feedback is provided based on the observation of classrooms using snapshots, informal and formal observations. Relevant feedback captures teachers' development aligned to the Danielson framework, and sufficiently includes targeted next steps, and a plan for follow-up classroom visits support. The leadership strongly acknowledges the edification of teachers, especially teachers new to the school by building on their strengths and encouraging them to serve as professional development facilitators to improve teacher practice. As a result, the timely evaluation of teacher practice promotes a heightened awareness on student achievement, and strengthens teacher pedagogy.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen academic tasks to ensure academic rigor is sufficiently embedded in all lessons in order to promote higher levels of thinking and cognitive engagement. 1.1
 - The school works collaboratively with Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and the Children First Achievement Coach, to design curriculum maps that are aligned with Common Core standards. Customized units of study reflect the Citywide Instructional Expectations and include a robust emphasis on informational text across the school.

All grades effectively completed performance tasks that are Common Core aligned, and include the school's focus on key standards such as reading and writing. However, at this time, the school is in the process of deepening its work to ensure that tasks are sufficiently rigorous for all students across the school and embed higher-order thinking skills. As a result, curriculum and coherence across grades and subject areas do not sufficiently close gaps for all students, including English language learners (ELL's), students with disabilities (SWD's) and other subgroups.

- The school uses a common teaching framework, professional development, unit plans, and the observation of classrooms to address the increased emphasis on rigorous instruction and higher-order skills across its grades and subjects. For example, in grade 3, teachers adjusted the performance tasks to include an inquiry approach by selecting a non-fiction unit of study. Teachers then adjusted the curriculum to include a hands-on approach that enables all students to dissect sharks in order to deepen their understanding about fish. However, this kind of rigorous instruction is not evident across all grades and classes and as a result, not all students, including subgroups, engage in activities that enable them to demonstrate their thinking.
- Strengthen the school's belief system to reflect the various ways that students learn and consistently provide multiple entry points to ensure that a diverse group of students achieve academic performance. 1.2
 - School leaders and teacher teams articulate a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teachers in some classrooms employ practices and tools such as the workshop model, technology, graphic organizers, and small groups to effectively engage students. For instance, in a grade 3 classroom, students work independently and then in pairs to annotate text focusing on fact and opinion. They make use of post-its to take notes, use context clues to find the meaning of unknown words, and then use extended responses to answer questions. Student groups are data informed, and students' multiple entry points are carefully considered in the teacher's planning and implementation of the lesson. However, classes across the school do not always sufficiently reflect challenging tasks and high levels of student engagement. Additionally, lessons are not consistently scaffolded to address varied student entry points. For example, in some classrooms, students are grouped for work according to assessment data to match their instructional needs. While in other classes, there is no expressed rationale for student grouping or all students work on the same task. Consequently, not all students, including ELL's and SWD's engage in learning opportunities that are well matched to their instructional needs, thus, stifling their ability to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.
- Broaden the use of assessments to consistently reflect checks for understanding, and provide clear feedback for next steps in order to make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all learners. 2.2
 - The school utilizes Fountas and Pinnell, ARIS, Acuity, Scantron, and formative assessments to identify strengths, weaknesses and patterns in student performance. Individual and teacher teams engage in the analysis of student work based on common rubrics. Rubrics are

customized to reflect the implementation of performance tasks, and assessed for effectiveness during team meetings. Rubric comments in a grade 4 classroom effectively demonstrate next steps regarding a science task on the water cycle. Teacher comments on student work indicate strengths and weakness, and in some cases, teachers identified students' next steps. However, the final rubric score does not always align with the score on the actual rubric. For example, in a small student group meeting, when a grade 4 student was asked what does a two plus on her writing meant, she replied, "I do not know; the teacher just gives it". Additionally, the student could not identify next steps to improve her work. Hence, some teachers' feedback to students is unclear, thereby limiting students' ability to improve their work products.

- The leadership uses professional development and teacher feedback to ensure that teachers have an understanding regarding the importance of employing strategies that check for students' comprehension. Teachers use strategies such as "turn and talk", and they ask mid-lesson questions to assess instructional understanding. However, strategies to monitor ongoing student learning are inconsistent across classrooms as the predominant means of checking for student understanding is at the conclusion of the lesson, based on exit slips that some teachers implement. Thus, some teachers miss opportunities during the execution of the lesson to effectively assess every student's understanding and make appropriate adjustments to curricular in order to meet the learning needs of all learners.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Ocean School	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