

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**FF Christopher A. Santora School**

**P.S. 222Q**

**Early Childhood Magnet School of Exploration**

**86-15 37th Avenue  
Jackson Heights, NY 11372**

**Principal: Yvonne Marrero**

**Dates of review: January 8-9, 2013**

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

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

### **Information about the school**

The F.F. Christopher A. Santora School is an early childhood school with 340 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises of 75% Hispanic, 7% White, 16% Asian and 2% other students. The student body includes 37% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.0%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school leader and teachers effectively align curricula to key standards and offer engaging learning experiences that challenge students and support their learning. (1.1)
  - The instructional cabinet reviewed the Citywide Instructional Expectations and conducted an analysis of student data such as Early Childhood Assessment of Mathematics (ECAM), Teacher's College assessments, unit assessments, and the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) to support their work on the alignment of the curriculum. The second grade team created a unit of study on informational writing. Students produced explanatory informational writing about things they know, one of the three types of writing outlined in the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). They generated ideas by thinking about subjects they can teach each other in which their knowledge was grounded in real life experiences. Students wrote about soccer, pets and baking cookies. Consequently, 60% of students increased one level on the structure and development strand of writing as compared to the pre-assessment rubric administered at the beginning of the unit. The noted progress demonstrates improvement in students' acquisition and application of skills taught in class, thereby closing the achievement gap and setting the beginning of a solid foundation for college and career readiness.
  - Teachers use standards based curricula and rubrics created by the coach and grade teams. During weekly team meetings that focus on designing units of study to cognitively engage students, teachers decided to introduce a text dependent question that can only be answered by referring explicitly back to the text, which is also a component of the expectations of the CCLS. The first grade team created text dependent bookmarks so that students would have readily available tools and strategies to help them share information about the book they read. Teachers' conferring notes demonstrate that students effectively used these text dependent bookmarks as tools and have improved their ability to identify specific text based evidence related to their reading.
- Teachers effectively use common assessments aligned to the curriculum which results in a clear understanding of the performance of students, and guides instructional decisions and informs planning. (2.2 )
  - At the beginning of the school year, a formative assessment in problem solving within the domain of numbers and operations in base ten was administered. It was noted that 73% of students were able to use addition strategies based on place value understanding and to correctly add two and three digit numbers within a multi-step problem solving context. However, only 56% of the students were able to explain their mathematical processes and incorporate the use of math vocabulary. Therefore, the teachers integrated more problem-solving work within the unit on place value, requiring mathematical explanations, justifications and proof in order to give students ongoing and consistent opportunities

to engage in mathematical problem-solving, representations, and writing. Students were introduced to several tools including a problem-solving checklist, and steps to apply specific algorithms to guide their work and support them in self-assessment. As a result, the winter math task, finding the largest sum, revealed that as a result of these curricular adjustments, 90% of second graders were able to accurately apply the procedures and find the correct answer and 77% were able to explain their solution process using appropriate math vocabulary, an increase of 17 and 21 percentage points, respectively

- Teachers evaluate the results of Teachers College Assessments, ECAM, conference notes, running records, end of unit assessments, New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test (NYSESLAT), and student performance tasks to determine actionable evidence of student performance. Teachers concluded that their practices with word study, a key component of early childhood learning, needed to be enhanced, as only 27% of the second graders were meeting proficiency in their word study program. The school decided to change the program from Foundations to Words Their Way. Teachers received professional development in order to develop knowledge and practice within the area of word study. As a result, student writing pieces indicate that 45% of the second graders are now meeting proficiency this area of study.
- The school conveys high expectations that promote parent involvement and support learning so that staff, students and families work together toward achieving the school's goals. (3.4)
  - School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire school community at staff meetings, through monthly newsletters, letters and memos about the mini observation process as well as professional goals set by teachers based on selected competencies from the Danielson's Framework. The Common Core library consisting of resources, videos and books outlining each of the standards was used to access videos of classroom practice, record low-inference observations, and practice using the Danielson's rubric to rate teacher's effectiveness in key competencies in order to norm teacher practice. The principal uses an iPad to record low-inference observations which are then emailed to teachers to guide one on one feedback discussions. As a result, 75% of the teachers set annual realistic and measurable professional goals based on Danielson's Framework, a significant increase over the two previous years which saw only 25% of teachers setting realistic measurable goals. The goals are tracked for progress weekly by the principal through class visits and a review of student data to ensure accountability toward meeting the specific targets leading to consistently increasing numbers of teachers meeting their goals.
  - Families receive monthly newsletters from classroom teachers to explain what students will be learning in reading, writing, math, social studies, and science, including the skills they need to acquire to meet the higher expectations for learning as they begin to prepare for college and careers. For example, the second grade November newsletter stated that in social studies, students would learn the history of New York City and discuss how it has changed over time, including physical changes, population changes, changes to buildings and homes. Students would conclude

their learning with a project describing the most significant changes to New York City to provide guidance on how to help their children organize important information sent home from school in folders. Parents stated that they appreciated the homework folder to support ongoing communication between school and home which provides opportunities for parents to express their questions and concerns about what their children are learning in school. The back flap of the folder includes a communication log designed for parents to post their comments or questions for teachers. Parent workshops are offered each month on topics such as: meet the teacher, nutrition, Common Core Standards, how children learn, how progress is measured, art, and establishing routines at home. As a result, parents are consistently made aware of what the children are learning in school and are well able to support them with the suggested strategies and resources as evidenced in 100% of the students completing their holiday homework assignments.

- The diligent principal has created a goal-oriented learning community that is well focused on teacher practice and student outcomes with intentional strategies to accelerate learning. (3.1)
  - Teams of teachers meet weekly to review a wide range of data in order to develop focused goals that support the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and fully analyze student progress to improve learning outcomes across all subjects. For example, one school goal is to use student friendly language in the teaching points of daily lessons in order to improve student work products. Based on a review of student writing samples, a trend across student writing was noted, in that students were not using punctuation or corrects capitalization in their sentences. The school determined that 75% of their struggling students needed to improve sentence structure in their writing. Based on this data, teachers participated in professional development on the use of illustrations and modeling to build students ability to appropriately apply these skills. Exposing struggling students to real life experiences, teachers worked with small groups and implemented their student friendly teaching points. Students were given strategies and visual examples to guide them on improving their sentence structure. As a result, this improved teacher practice enhanced student writing in on-demand pieces and homework which demonstrated an increase in the use of capitalization, student notes and punctuation as noted in writing pieces in student work folders, thus meeting the school's goal through the use of specific effective instructional strategies that lead to demonstrated improvements in writing products.

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

- Refine teaching practices to ensure teachers strategically provide multiple entry points so that lessons challenge all students in their learning and result in producing meaningful work products. (1.2)
  - Teachers across the school work together to plan lessons and use scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into instruction in response to student's needs and interests, including special education students. The use of picture clues help students build their vocabulary as noted in their

reading notebooks. Also, the school focuses on supporting high needs students such as English language learners by hiring dual certified teachers of English language learners (ELLs), and uses Title III funds to provide supplemental services via an after school program and purchases instructional materials to be used during the day to increase student achievement. However, lessons do not always challenge all students, particularly high performers, to their full potential, in that assignments do not include opportunities for them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills or extend their learning, thus limiting even greater levels of achievement.

- Build upon the existing culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes towards capacity building in order to increase student academic achievement and enhance the personal development of teachers. (1.4)
  - Parents voice their appreciation for the dedicated staff and their efforts to keep them informed about their children's progress. They further state that the extension to communication systems by the creation of a school website that is under development would fully support family outreach and keep them updated of their children's school experiences and their next learning steps. In response to the school's Learning Environment Survey, the school is working to increase teacher voice and engage more teachers in the decision-making process. The principal has created an instructional cabinet which consists of the principal, math coach, literacy coach, a teacher from each grade, a cluster teacher and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teacher. This team meets weekly to review data, discuss curriculum and school policies. The instructional cabinet shares their findings with the staff through a newsletter and at staff meetings. However, professional development is not strategically aligned to the differentiated needs of the teachers to enable all teachers to feel that they play a meaningful role in setting goals and making important decisions for the school. As a result, efforts to stimulate teacher investments for ownership and active participation in promoting their growth is limited, restricting full impact on students' academic and personal behaviors.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: F. F. Christopher A. Santora	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>