

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Q273

Elementary School Q273

**88-07 102nd Street
Richmond Hill, N Y 11418**

Brenda Ward, Principal

Dates of review: December 18-19, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 273 is an elementary school with 134 students from Pre-K through grade 2. The school population comprises 13% Black, 66% Hispanic, 4% White, and 14% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. 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

- School leaders and faculty align curricula to State standards that effectively engage all learners in common core units of study, including the citywide instructional shifts that result in improved academic performance. (1.1)
 - The principal and faculty have made a concerted effort to address the findings in the school's 2011 Peer Review report by revising curriculum maps to align with the Common Core Standards. The school's curriculum specialist and grade teams developed curriculum maps and units of study that are aligned horizontally and vertically by themes and address key standards in reading, writing and math that help to create a transparent lens that is consistent across the grades. Teams also adjusted the City's Kindergarten through grade 2 tasks bundles to include more rigorous nonfiction tasks, embed more vocabulary, and develop rubrics to better align with their units. This has led to an increase of nonfiction study that focuses on developing reading and writing across the school as well as improving student vocabulary development. As a result, students across the school are on track in literacy as evidenced in the school's Primary Literacy Assessments.
 - The principal indicated that her team did a great job revising curriculum maps, and planning academic tasks to ensure that all students including English language learners and students with disabilities are cognitively engaged. For example, in a first grade general education class, the teacher created groups based on students' independent reading levels. Students engage in a math lesson identifying math doubles, and respond to the prompt, "is it fair to share?" The teacher circulates the class as students turn and talk to their partner about their rationale in determining if a number is a double or not, make real life connections, and remain cognitively engaged throughout the lesson. Further, questions are embedded in the teachers' unit study planning and students who experience difficulties are identified early and given additional support in completing their task assignments. As a result, the school knows the learning needs of every student and teachers use their own planning documents that ensure that students make progress as evidenced by formative assessments, and student math work products that reflect improvement in problem solving.
- The leadership's effective organizational decision making provides multiple opportunities for students to engage in challenging academic experiences and the learning needs of a diverse group of students are met. (1.3)
 - The school's instructional vision is to improve the language needs of its students and to create independent thinkers. Teachers are provided with common planning time three times per week to develop cognitively demanding lessons and they create relevant planning documents such as curriculum maps, and performance tasks that engage all learners and improve student academic performance. As the school continues to grow a new grade each year, the principal wanted this new grade of second grade teachers to have more time to collaborate with each other. Therefore, Grade 2 teachers are scheduled for daily common planning

time and develop Common Core standards-based lessons, use purposeful protocols to review student work, and create unit assessments. They intentionally adjust the curriculum and align the performance tasks to their grade's unit of study, "Where is Home", and include greater emphasis on informational writing. Consequently, exemplary performance tasks are on display addressing topics such as New York City Overtime, and Grade 2 students are able to articulate aspects of change that took place in New York City over a period of time, and relate some of the changes to rural, urban, and suburban areas to their lives.

- The school has a "hiring team" who assists with the identification, interviewing and hiring of key staff members. The team reviews information found in the Department of Education's on-line human resource division, *Open Market*, and select candidates that are a "good match" for the school. In an effort to address the instructional focus of the school which is to ensure that students are fluent readers and writers, the school hired a writing cluster teacher who works daily with teachers. Parent leaders are trained to work in small groups and individually with students to implement a research-based literacy intervention program for struggling learners. Hence, adults share the responsibility for effectively supporting the goals of the school, and improving the academic needs of student groupings, including English language learners, and students with disabilities.
- Individual teachers and teacher teams use various forms of assessments and grading policies to monitor student progress towards the goals and adjust curriculum and instruction in response to the needs of all learners. (2.2)
 - Presently the school uses a variety of assessment tools, including a Primary Literacy Assessment program three times a year to assess and monitor the independent reading growth, math assessments, checklists, conference notes grading policies and rubrics. These assessments effectively measure student performance, monitor growth and provide teachers with clear data needed to adjust teaching and planning to better address student needs. The kindergarten team adjusted their instruction based on their analysis of student work on performance tasks using their common rubric to now include more punctuation, and pictures. As a result of consistent use of these assessment tools the school capacity is supported and creates a comprehensive portrait of student learning needs.
 - Teachers effectively employ common assessments that are developed individually and during teacher teams. Based on the analysis of assessments, students are grouped, and afforded time to meet individually with teachers who discuss strengths and weaknesses in their learning. In group discussion with students, students articulate very well their strengths and next steps. A second grader shared that she does not use enough vocabulary, and it was one of her goals to improve in this area. Consequently, all students know their learning needs and next steps, and teachers collaborate with students, including English language learners and students with disabilities to address their needs in a timely manner and make adjustments, such as revising rubrics to include rigor and punctuation, target student needs and improve their performance in writing.

- The principal has established a coherent vision of school level goals that are shared by the entire community and successfully tracked to enable targeted professional development to improve teacher practice across classrooms. (3.1)
 - As the founding leader of the school, the principal maintains that she keeps a steady eye on the development of school goals and the movement the school makes towards achieving them through the use of planning documents. These documents are collaboratively developed and include the Comprehensive Education Plan, the Principal Performance Review, and are aligned with the Citywide Expectations. The school’s math program was changed in order to provide more sequential lessons and offer teachers targeted feedback in skills regarding the performance of students. Math goals were adjusted to include greater emphasis on questioning and problem solving. The program allows the school to effectively track the performance and progress of all students, and make adjustments, such as offer small group intervention services or Response to Intervention support (RTI). The community is aware of the goals and grade meetings, and open school forums ensure that all constituents know the progress of the school. Hence, there is coherence and ownership of the school’s efforts to accelerate student learning and foster social –emotional growth.
 - The principal uses the goals, and the success in meeting the goals to establish professional development for teachers. Based on data, the school identified blending, fluency and comprehension as a need for all students. As a result, teachers receive continuous comprehensive professional development facilitated by the curriculum specialist, writing cluster teacher, and principal in target areas. Consequently, the school uses various forms of tracking tools, including computer generated programs in literacy and math and ensure that students achieve positive learning outcomes. Teachers improve their practice as evidenced by thoughtful questioning based on Depth of Knowledge and students create well developed literacy performance tasks.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the use of strategic teaching strategies that embed multiple entry points in the curricula for all learners, including relevant subgroups and result in higher-order thinking for all students. (1.2)
 - The school’s common framework is the Danielson model, and is used to support the school’s belief system about how students learn by providing a shared understanding of instructional excellence across the school. Across the school, teachers involve students in small flexible groups and utilize effective engagement strategies such as “turn and talk.” There are multiple opportunities for students to share their learning with peers, and classrooms reflect learning centers with various kinds of leveled texts, and writing materials enable students to grow as independent thinkers, readers and writers. Increased emphasis is placed on questioning, and vocabulary development is achieved through discussion, and direct

teaching of phonics instruction. However, high levels of engagement were not evident in all classrooms. In some classrooms, more advanced students quickly completed the task, yet they had to wait for the rest of the class to “catch up”. Hence, not all students engage in critical thinking tasks that are strategically discussed at the team level in order to maximize student learning.

- Teacher teams participate in regular discussion and professional development related to the individualized teaching needs of students and instructional strategies that are designed to engage all learners. For example, teachers use data to group students, and engage them in tasks targeted to their specific needs. However, teaching strategies and scaffolds do not strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions do not always target a broad range of diverse learners. Hence, not all students are appropriately challenged and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work, resulting in diminished well-suited learning experiences.
- Refine systems for providing feedback to teachers regarding the observation of classroom teaching that is specific to each teacher’s pedagogic needs in order to improve their practice. (4.1)
 - Teachers, including those new to the school and the principal engage in the Danielson model for teaching with a specific focus around questioning and discussion techniques. Teacher practice is observed formally, informally, intervisitations and through instructional rounds. The principal commented how direct support, such as modeling, verbal and written feedback provided support to a teacher new to the school. Strategies such as “turn and talk, enabled the teacher to release some responsibility to the students. Based on targeted feedback and next steps regarding questioning and effective discussion strategies, the teacher’s observation was excellent. At the conclusion of instructional rounds, the principal shares a detailed written summary based on the team’s observation with staff members. In some cases, immediately following the rounds, select teachers receive additional follow-up with feedback using the framework as a lens. However, while the feedback addresses the domains of the framework, feedback is mostly verbal, and does not always address each teacher’s individual needs, in a structured manner, such as in the case of the teacher new to the school. As a result, the ability for the leadership to effectively monitor individual teacher growth is diminished.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: P.S. 273		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