

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**I.S. 027 Anning S. Prall**

**Middle School R027**

**11 Clove Lake Place  
Staten Island  
NY 10310**

**Principal: Tracey Kornish**

**Dates of review: December 10 - 11, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Evelyn Castro**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

I.S. 027 Anning S. Prall is a middle school with 1068 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 23% Black, 37% Hispanic, 28% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 23% 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 92.5%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers offer a wide range of rigorous and challenging experiences including the arts, during, before and after school to facilitate student ownership and engagement in their learning. (1.1)
  - The school aligns the curriculum with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) by having teachers across grades and subjects create two Common Core instructional tasks for each subject that focus on key standards: vocabulary in context across the curriculum and measurement in math and science. During classroom observations there was evidence that the visual and performing arts are used as another vehicle to enhance the curriculum and engage students as well as give students ways to express their understandings. As a result of a prior review, the school made a conscious decision to purchase texts and CCLS-aligned professional development materials from Pearson to be used strategically along with the support of supervisory observations and feedback. The resulting coherent instructional plan maximizes the opportunity for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to have improved learning outcomes and it helps to close the achievement gap. There is also a school-wide practice of using flexible groupings. For example, teachers in grade 7 were observed using flexible grouping and target measurement lessons in math. This differentiated curriculum gives students who need support the extra practice they need, thus helping to move them toward college and career readiness.
  - Teacher teams meet across the grade and subjects to examine student work, creating baseline writing tasks and then developing lessons that provide rigor for a diverse group of learners. Teachers also use their assessments to create targeted instruction that promotes higher order thinking. The Kisella project piloted at the school ensures higher-level thinking for English language learners' classes. In science curricula, teachers emphasized through discussion the use of appropriate vocabulary and the scaffolding of understanding and concepts as classes explore the changing environment based on first hand experiences with hurricane Sandy. In English language arts classes, teachers use journalism as vehicle to have students create a newsletter, which embeds varied writing tasks in the curriculum in a coherent way across grades so student can demonstrate their thinking and build competency, as evidenced by the quality of articles and editorials in the school newsletter.
- The staff operate under the shared belief that students learn best when they have ownership over the learning process, leading to high levels of student engagement and meaningful student work products school-wide. (1.2)
  - Across classrooms teachers' continuous use of the Danielson Framework in lesson planning, along with observation reports by supervisors and staff, Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix, the Depth of Knowledge Questioning Strategies by classroom teachers during instruction and documented in their lesson plans and their link to CCLS-aligned texts focus teacher preparation and instruction offer all students multiple entry points and high quality supports into the curricula, including English language

learners and students with disabilities. Students observed working in pairs and groups to practice peer and self-assessment were very engaged and the conversations in the pair sharing provided an opportunity for students to use the new vocabulary in discussion and while questioning their partners. Teachers modified the content of the English language arts lessons based on argumentative performance tasks aligned to strategically selected CCLS. For example, 7<sup>th</sup> grade students discussed the usefulness of zoos in society in order to align with the Common Core Performance Task of researching the topic “Do We Need Zoo’s In Our Society” and finding information to support their opinion as they developed skill in writing a persuasive essay. Teachers’ plans showed evidence of lessons where skills were consistently integrated into each lesson in order to facilitate understanding and participation.

- High levels of engagement and an enthusiasm for learning were consistently observed in student discussions and evidenced in high-quality work products. Science and art play an especially integral role in student expression school-wide. For example, students were planning and rehearsing musical performances celebrating Staten Island’s ability to survive the storm and rebuild. Murals and dioramas evidenced group planning, creativity and scientific understanding of the environment as students designed how new construction of devastated areas could be made into improved living and recreation areas for local residents. Students researched and compared rebuilding efforts in other devastated areas like New Orleans and included that information in their designs. In small group discussions students were able to explain their designs and the reasons for certain aspects of their planning, including the durability of materials as well as complex designs that were water and wind resistant. Meaningful work products such as these reflect the high levels of student thinking consistently employed throughout the school.
- The dedicated principal and faculty work as a unified team to coordinate activities that engage all students in their own learning and promote social, emotional and academic growth among all members of the community. (1.4)
  - School leaders greet children every morning in order to reinforce their expectations for a day of learning and to build an inclusive culture that supports progress toward school goals in a safe environment. Sports, club activities and student government begin at 6 am each morning, allowing students many entry points into school life in order for their voices to be heard. For example, students were part of the decision to increase clubs and sports in the school. Parent and student interviews revealed positive personal bonding between students and staff. Students were confident in their high school and college plans, and made a connection between their academic program and the personal behaviors required to be ready for high school and college. Decisions on student academic and extracurricular activities were made through collaborative planning with parents and school staff. Student and parent decisions include selection of one of the school academies, selection of art or music classes as well as a choice in sports activities. These activities support student social-emotional growth and contributed to a 47% decrease in student suspensions this year.
  - Activities in the school include band, chorus, visual arts and multiple afterschool clubs and support groups. The three academies, Engineering,

Journalism and Enterprise, expose students to a variety of academic paths. Students stated that both in-class and before- and after-school activities staff know them and have high expectations of their achievement and expect good attendance. As a result of these opportunities and positive relationships with the staff, student attendance rates have improved in the past year from 91.4% to 92.5%. Each academy has a dean, counselor, assistant principal and academic coach that meet frequently to plan and support the social emotional growth of the students. During interviews children stated they felt supported at school through the help of teachers, counselors, and school leaders, and they expressed that they knew how to ask for academic help or help with other problems. Evidence of their positive impact is seen through the increasing number of students earning a place on the honor roll each year; during the school year ending in 2010 there were 52 students on the permanent honor roll and during the school year ending in 2012 there were 86 students on the permanent honor roll. Furthermore, during the second marking period in 2013, 477 students were placed on an honor roll, compared to the 456 students that were placed on an honor roll during the second marking period in 2012.

- Observations by school leaders aligned to the standards and supported by the Danielson teaching framework assist all staff, including new teachers, in being reflective and elevating school-wide instructional practice (4.1)
  - School leaders initiate teacher development through a self-assessment tool and research-based formative assessments program. The principal and assistant principals alternate formal and informal observations with frequent short visits to classrooms and give actionable feedback to teachers using practices aligned to the Danielson rubric. The principal and her team developed this system and, after a review of data, purchased specific observation checklists as well as formal and informal rubrics for walk-throughs that align with the CCLS and identify student needs. The system has aligned instruction, observation, feedback professional development and student outcomes. New teachers receive additional support by being assigned a mentor, and they participate in external professional development activities as well. As a result of these systems and ongoing review of periodic assessments and teacher observations, school leaders expand effective instructional practices and promote teacher development. For example, observations of team meetings revealed the support of new teachers through collaboration with senior teachers and coaches in developing best practices regarding teaching measurement in math.
  - School leaders use a research-based framework to observe teachers and provide them with actionable feedback through verbal and electronic media. Teachers develop Specific Measureable Attainable Realistic and Timely goals that are a part of the focus of pre- and post-observation conferences. School leaders then follow up with targeted professional development opportunities, monitoring of teacher practice, participation in team meetings and review of assessment data. Review of the ongoing assessments led the academic team to focus on developing vocabulary and measurement across grades and in all subjects. This emphasis is revealed in lesson planning and supported through professional development. English language arts teachers in team planning meetings were observed working collaboratively to plan effective vocabulary

development lessons including words like tectonics, and tsunami in the context across subjects and grades. This has led to significant progress toward the school's instructional goal to improve students' learning outcomes. Specifically, the number of level fours increased from 23% in grade 7 English language arts in 2011 to 25% in 2012; the schools specialized high school acceptance rate increased, and the number of level four students in science assessment increased by 20%.

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

- Continue to develop consistent checks for understanding during lessons and student self-assessment so that teachers make effective adjustments to instruction in order to meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
  - Data binders and minutes from the math team and English language arts team meetings reflect analysis of a variety of assessments aligned to the standards as well as the results of student performance. Frequent discussions, meetings three to four times weekly and review of lessons help the teachers keep their curriculum aligned closely to the school's standards and impact teacher instructional decisions and grading policies as evidenced by attendance sheets and meeting minutes. Although teachers develop common rubrics in team meetings, sharing strategies for ongoing checks for understanding was not observed. As a result, teachers move on with their lessons with some children not fully understanding or ready to move to the next level. This lack of consistent checking for understanding limits teachers' ability to make targeted, effective adjustments to practice based on student needs.
  - Teacher teams that include coaches and supervisors examine individual formative assessment data for all students including those with disabilities and English language learners. Using the assessment information and benchmarked data from teacher-made and Pearson assessments, teachers have mainstreamed and decertified students in various subjects. Instructors focus on enhancing the teaching of vocabulary, which is a school-wide goal. Although the school has made some progress in this area with students with disabilities, the school has not made enough progress with the English language learner population. The Kissella project for English language learner student instruction will be in effect next year which can target and improve instruction in the area of English language learner teacher practice. Because it is not in effect at this time, academic progress is currently hindered for this population.
- Increase opportunities for teacher development and leadership in order to enhance professional collaboration and improve teacher practice. (4.2)
  - While the staff analyzes students' assessment results and makes some effective adjustments to teacher practice and student placement, consistent analysis of data for particular groups of students across subjects and grades was not observed. Because the staff is still developing systematic analyses of student performance and is currently enhancing key elements of teacher work and practice, improvement of instruction is still limited leading to missed opportunities for student subgroups to achieve mastery.

- Teacher teams meet frequently to analyze data and enhance the teaching of the CCLS. Teachers are very involved and articulate regarding building their capacity as teachers, however it appears that the coaches and supervisors lead each team meeting, not the teachers themselves. Because distributed leadership structures are not currently embedded, there is limited opportunities for effective or consistent teacher leadership built into meeting formats, which limits learning and growth for both staff and students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Anning S. Prall Middle School	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>