

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Francis J. Murphy, Jr.**

**Elementary School R039**

**71 Sand Lane  
Staten Island  
NY 10305**

**Principal: Tracey Wright**

**Dates of review: March 18-19, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Francis J. Murphy, Jr. is an elementary school with 578 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 29% Hispanic, 52% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 11% 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 94.9%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes effective organizational decisions in support of the school's instructional goals, thus closing the achievement gap. (1.3)
  - Knowing that teachers needed additional support in pedagogical skills and goals to improve the Progress Report score, the principal used resources to hire an assistant principal with a background in early childhood education at the start of the school year. The assistant principal primarily focuses on the early childhood grades and has spearheaded several professional development initiatives regarding the citywide instructional expectations, specifically using text-dependent questions with students grounding their writing with evidence from text as well as increased opportunities for text-based student discussion using evidence from text to support their dialogue. In addition, the principal continues to support the on-site UFT Teacher Center by funding a full-time coach. This center is now an integral part of the support teachers receive as they improve their practice. Additionally, through funding from the local city councilman, the school purchased laptop computers for classroom use and converted a classroom into a school library/technology media center. The school also partners with the Staten Island Foundation and the Office of School and Youth Development to fund the implementation of the Leader in Me program, providing professional development for teachers and support materials for students to promote student independence and metacognition. Teachers have a minimum of two common planning periods in their programs as well as a common lunch period. They use this time to meet to plan units or to participate in professional development such the critical friends' initiative for grade 2 teachers around mathematics instruction. The principal also uses funds for per session monies enabling grade level teachers to review data monthly and to update curricula units. This work has contributed to changes to teachers' instructional practices as reflected in observation reports.
  - The principal, after reviewing data from fourth and fifth grade classrooms, made shifts in teaching assignments to create better matches in grade level teams as well as in individual assignments. She hired an additional teacher, who pushes into fourth and fifth grade classrooms to work with students in groups in reading and math. Two additional teachers were hired to provide more support to students with disabilities (SWD). Teachers on staff participated in the interview process. Professional development on quality Individualized Education Plan (IEP) writing has been provided by the network so teachers have a better grasp of student goals and specific pedagogical skills that students need for success. Paraprofessionals in the self-contained and the Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classrooms are also provided with opportunities for professional development. They meet with teachers and are a part of lesson planning so that they are able to assist in meeting the needs of the students in their care. This work has resulted in an increased focus on students with disabilities with these students, in particular, receiving more focused support in their classrooms.
- The school cultivates a safe and inclusive learning environment that supports the adoption of effective personal and academic development of both students and adults. (1.4)

- Recognizing that preparing students to be college and career ready is a major goal, the school is a part of the Leader in Me program. The program is based on Stephen Covey's Seven Habits for Highly Effective People and was selected for its integrated approach to incorporate leadership skills across all aspects of learning and student development. Having secured funding from the Staten Island Foundation and the Office of School and Youth Development, the Leader in Me program is now a focal point across the school and a mantra for students. Teachers attended several days of professional development prior to the school year, and infuse the habits in lessons and curricula. Students can recite the seven habits and can discuss why a particular habit is important. One student stated, "This program has helped me so much here in school. I have so much more confidence." Students and teachers have jointly developed mission statements for each classroom, posted on the classroom door for all to see, promoting student ownership of behavior. The school's Book of the Month program also focuses on books with character development themes in the seven areas. Parents have embraced the program saying that their children talk about the habits at home and have embraced the tenets of the program. One parent stated, "My child comes home talking about the seven habits and always gets to her homework now without complaint because her job has to be done!" Students, in this culturally diverse school, also promote the kindness of other. On a large tree, posted on a very large bulletin board in the student lunchroom, student post "leaves" writing about good deeds and positive student behaviors other students have exhibited. Furthermore, a students' Leadership Club meets weekly with the guidance counselor and, on their own, write and make daily announcements over the school's public address system and volunteer as monitors in the student lunchrooms and playground. These initiatives have resulted in a cohesive school environmental focus for all students and in a decrease in student disciplinary removals from classrooms.
- Mindful that students can only learn when they are in school, the school has a focused attendance initiative. Classes with perfect attendance are announced daily over the public address system. Classes with the highest number of perfect attendance days in a month are rewarded with a pizza party. The guidance counselor works with students who have poor attendance and punctuality and the causes and prevention. In addition, as a result of Hurricane Sandy, the school received a grant from America Cares which provides counseling support to affected families and students. The parent coordinator lends support to affected families by coordinating a food pantry where families may avail themselves of much needed food. Additionally, student achievements are celebrated also by honor rolls for students' academic and behavioral success which are posted outside of the main office. Responsible student ambassadors greet visitors and represent the school at external events. These initiatives result in a school community where students are well known by staff and supported in their academic and learning needs.
- The school aligns common assessments to curricula and uses rubrics to provide feedback to students thus determining student progress toward goals and adjustments to curriculum and instruction. (2.2)
  - Teachers use pre- and post- assessments as a part of the CCLS units of study as well as unit tests in the literacy resources including materials from the Journeys program. For each unit on-demand pre- and post- writing assessments take place in addition to fully developed writing during units. In math, teachers are using assessments from the Math in Focus program in the early childhood grades and in Everyday Math and from the Exemplars series as well as the

CCLS units of study. Rubrics have been revised to meet the expectations of the CCLS across these two areas by teacher teams. In turn, students can speak to their strengths and next steps in problem solving using rubrics from the Exemplars programs and results from these assessments provide actionable feedback to teachers regarding student progress.

- Common assessments are used across grade levels to inform student progress. They include Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for students in grades kindergarten through 5 with reports going home to parents three times yearly, running records in reading and Acuity in English language arts and math for students in grades 3 to 5. Data review time is scheduled monthly for teachers to meet as a grade to analyze and discuss data, subsequently, make revisions to units and adjustments to instructional practices. For instance, as a result of DRA data, there is an increased focus in the early grades on word work this year. Teachers also meet with the principal and assistant principal twice yearly, in individual meetings, to discuss the classroom data, including conference notes, used to track student progress. In addition, cycles for the extended day program change during the year driven by data results to better meet student needs. These various data streams allow teachers to continuously make adjustments to units of study and curriculum maps as well meet student learning needs.
- School leaders' observations of classroom practice elevate school-wide practices through effective feedback for all teachers and targeted support for new teachers, thus providing leverage for professional growth. (4.1)
  - The UFT coach serves as a mentor to all new teachers in a risk free situation. New teachers spoke of feeling very supported by the coach, their colleagues and the administration. For example, this support is evident in one new teacher's classroom as students worked on math in groups with adults facilitating the learning of the groups where students used protocols for the discussion, and other students were working independently. School leaders meet with teachers individually to discuss their strengths and areas for improvement and teachers set goals for themselves at the start of the year. These goals are referred to during the year as supervisors conduct short cycles of observation using the Danielson framework and meet with teachers to provide feedback along with supports for next steps. Teachers may also request professional development in areas in which they would like additional assistance. In addition, through looking at trends as a result of walkthroughs, professional development this year has focused on questioning and discussion in all areas as well as text-dependent questioning and discussion. One teacher, supported by an achievement coach from the network, improved in her questioning and pacing of her mini-lesson over the course of the year. She is now asking higher level questions in her lessons and uses a timer to make sure her lesson is on the pace it should be. Another teacher who had solid routines in place in teacher-led discussion, with coaching from a supervisor, moved from teacher-dominated to having students take an active role in facilitating conversation in groups. Additionally, professional development is provided in-house by administrators, the UFT coach or by teachers who have attended a particular training and turnkey the information to their grade level colleagues. A professional development team meets weekly to review instructional goals and plan professional development. The network's instructional team provides professional development around math and questioning including the use of a critical friends protocol used in the early childhood grades. Grade level teachers view each others lessons facilitated by an achievement coach and then debrief with the observed teacher using a protocol. As a result of this work, teachers now use anchor charts and have

developed open-ended questions where students provide evidence for math problems they solve. As a result of these efforts, observation data notes that teacher practice improved to better meet the student needs as they strive to meet the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards.

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

- Ensure effective implementation of rigorous academic units and tasks that require higher order thinking skills and result in cognitive engagement of all learners. (1.1)
  - The school curriculum reflects continuity across disciplines. This could be seen in student work products and charts displayed in classrooms and in attending teacher team meetings. There is a focus this year in the use of non-fiction text and informational and argumentative writing and these foci are seen in classroom visits and in maps. In addition, there is an emphasis on students participating in text-dependent activities. In math, students work on problems with real world application and teachers model thinking. In reviewing curriculum maps, there were modifications on the maps for students with disabilities, but very limited focus on higher achieving students. As a result, some students who need more rigorous lessons and extensions are not receiving them at this time.
- Increase teacher capacity to consistently utilize strategies, scaffolds and tasks that challenge all learners and promote high levels of thinking. (1.2)
  - In visiting some classrooms, routines and rituals, such as pre-determined student partnerships for conversation and visual cues for appropriate behaviors during discussion, are in place to engage students in discussion formats such as turn and talk with a partner or in small group discussions at student tables. In these classrooms, students were having discussions without the constant support of the teacher. However, inconsistencies exist in allowing students to extend their thinking through discussion. In other classrooms, all questioning and discussion was teacher-dominated and students did not respond to classmates' thinking. As a result, not all students have the opportunity to think more broadly around what they are learning and are not interacting with one another to extend their thinking.
  - While students were grouped by reading levels with appropriate texts for activities in several of the classrooms, there was no purposeful grouping in other classrooms. In classrooms where effective grouping occurred, students were working on independent or center activities while teachers worked with small groups in guided reading, for example. In some of the rooms, students used differentiated graphic organizers to help them focus in writing or had paper choice. In other classrooms, students sat at tables working on the same activity and were considered a group by the teacher, but students did not interact with one another. Supports were not evident to assist students in interacting as a group. In other instances, while teachers were working with students grouped either by reading level or through the use of an exit slip from a prior lesson, the questions asked of students were leading and did not enable students to think critically. As a result, the entry points of some students including students with disabilities and higher achieving students are not being met.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Francis J. Murphy, Jr.	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>