

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The New Dorp School

31R0041

**216 Clawson Street
Staten Island
NY 10306**

Principal: Elise Feldman

Dates of review: October 24, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Erminia Claudio

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 41 is an elementary school with 720 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4.0% Black, 28.0% Hispanic, 62% White, and 5% Asian students and 1% other. The student body includes 6.5% English language learners and 19.3% special education students. Boys account for 51.39% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48.61%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 96.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions that are well aligned to the school's goals of improved pedagogy and meaningful student work in all content areas. (1.3)
 - The principal sustained a literacy grant from the Staten Island Foundation to purchase the *Independent Investigation Method* (IIM) to support deepened levels of project based research learning. Students self-select topics for investigation and use resource books and the internet to research their topics. This grant affords teachers the opportunity to participate in professional development that guides the work of aligning the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to the core curriculum. The principal used her budget to sustain full time music and visual arts teachers and an art partnership that provides students with rich experiences through the arts. For example, students in second grade work with the "TADA" theater group writing their own scripts and lyrics for performance. Further, the school funds a pre-kindergarten through grade five music program that scaffolds vocal and instrumental experiences. As a result, students are engaged in tasks across the content areas that support the school's overarching focus on the listening, speaking and writing supports the rigor of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
 - School leaders schedule teacher instructional team and inquiry team meetings that specifically assess and address student learning needs. Grade level inquiry teams meet twice weekly to analyze student work and develop pedagogical strategies that are implemented grade wide. An instructional coach supports the work of creating tasks that are aligned to the CCLS. In addition, a newly instituted Response to Intervention (RTI) plan provides two periods of push-in support each week for small group targeted instruction. All teachers inclusive of cluster teachers, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and academic intervention personnel support this initiative. In addition, all pull-out services are coordinated so that they are simultaneous. This scheduling limits the disruption of student learning. Consequently, at the teacher inquiry team meeting, teachers voiced that intensive small group work has benefited all students. Teachers cite increases from pre and post unit assessment both in ELA and math and students' oral running records responses to inferential thinking questions.
- Common baseline and benchmark assessments aligned to the school's curriculum provide consistent progress monitoring of all students and lead to effective instructional adjustments. (2.2)
 - Teachers build on the prior year's practice of aligning assessments to curricula and use on-going assessment practices to pinpoint areas of need to strategically adjust instruction to support student learning. Unit assessments linked to school wide reading, writing and math programs are expanded by the use of teacher conference notes, anecdotal records, the extensive use of rubrics, student self-assessments and reflections.

This information is then catalogued in an all inclusive electronic database that provides a clear portrait of student growth and needs. This data is shared and analyzed with the school community in various venues; instructional team meetings, inquiry team meetings, faculty conferences and one-on-one conferences with the principal. This enables teachers to adjust instructional supports and resources and provide ongoing feedback to students as well as monitor the school's Response to Intervention plan (RTI). As a result, the school credits the work that was done last year around small group targeted instruction in literacy and mathematics to the notable increase on the school's Progress Report in the area of Student Performance from a "C" in 2010 to "A" in 2011.

- The school maintains a culture of learning that supports high expectations for staff, students and families and prioritizes college and career readiness. (3.4)
 - The school has been honored for its college and career readiness focus, receiving recognition for creating an "I am going to college," mantra that impacted the entire school community. Through an extensive Pencil partnership and a partnership with the College of Staten Island, students and parents explored the various facets of college attendance. Workshops were provided on scholarships and funding, and incentives raised the level of scholastic success. In consultation with the school leadership team, the school expanded the traditional Honor Roll and Merit Roll awards, and initiated a "Rising Stars" program that rewarded student progress in academics and socio-emotional growth. A bilingual protocol, "Going to College/ Vamos a la Universidad" has been implemented in grades 1 and 2, encouraging students to "work hard and get smart." Consequently, an increased culture of learning school-wide has been fostered; students take ownership of their academic progress, enabling them to proudly explain the use of rubrics and are aware of their next steps.
- Strong, routinely scheduled professional collaborations on all grade levels enable teachers to reflect on student needs, improve instruction and develop leadership skills. (4.2)
 - All teachers are actively engaged in scheduled, structured teacher teams that use a specific protocol to deepen their understanding of content and the Common Core Learning Standards. The teams use the inquiry model to analyze student work and adjust instruction to address student needs. For example, kindergarten teachers, reflecting on school wide trends, recognized that number sense instruction needed to be enhanced. By examining the student responses to exemplars they were able to determine that their understanding of student thinking would be deepened if students were asked while they were doing the actual work what their thinking was and then recorded for future reference. The school refers to this as "on the spot conferencing." As a result, all teachers now utilize conferencing techniques during math to record student thinking and guide small group instruction.
 - The school's instructional team serves as a resource that provides vital input into all academic and instructional decisions school wide. While there are core members on the team that stay constant, other teachers routinely rotate onto the team, enabling them to participate in meaningful

dialogues and share in the decision making process, while deepening their knowledge of the Common Core Learning Standards and school trends. For example, the team the reviewer met with had attended Lucy West math professional development. The team shared their understanding of the concepts that were presented at the professional development and how this would be shared with grade colleagues, with the ultimate goal of improved pedagogy. As a result, teachers voiced that the team structure has afforded them the opportunity to participate in decision making as evidenced by strong teacher input into the selection of school's new reading and math programs. The unit assessments from these programs already indicate student growth in ELA and math as indicated on teacher pre and post assessments.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure teaching practices consistently reflect the school's work around questioning so that all learners are challenged to think critically. (1.2)
 - The school's belief that students learn best when they are given tasks that challenge their thinking is supported by the collaborative planning during team meetings. This planning has resulted in differentiated lessons that incorporate Depth of Knowledge, and are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. However, in a few classes the level of questioning does not universally lead to high levels of student thinking. Many students were encouraged to explain the rationale for their responses such as in one lesson where students were asked "So, what happened to your original ideas?" In a few classrooms however, literal questions did not give students the opportunity to expand on their understanding of concepts, limiting the level of discussion. As a result some students were not challenged to meet levels of thinking required by the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Enhance curriculum resources so that all students, including English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities are meaningfully engaged and challenged. (1.1)
 - The school's data analysis of the 2010-2011 English Language Arts and Math State Exams indicated that the school needed to provide intensive instruction for their most struggling students and support high achieving students so that they maintain a steady level of growth. To ensure that all students are cognitively engaged and challenged, the school made purposeful decisions to develop tasks and purchase curriculum resources that focus on the school's identified key standards of higher order thinking and comprehension skills in reading, number sense and application and conceptualization in mathematics and response to text across all content areas in writing. This was the motivation for purchasing Mondo Oral Language program to support English Language Learners (ELL) students with oral language acquisition, exemplars in mathematics to support problem solving and enhancing the existing *Book of the Month response to deepen critical thinking*. However, although teachers indicate that the resources are cognitively engaging, there is insufficient evidence yet of how these resources are supporting individual student achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The New Dorp 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