

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Louis Desario School

Elementary School 056

**250 KRAMER AVENUE
STATEN ISLAND
New York 10309**

Principal: DEAN SCALI

Dates of review: December 10 -11, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 56 The Louis Desario School is an elementary school with 769 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 10% Hispanic, 85% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 94.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school gathers and analyzes meaningful sources of data aligned to the curriculum to identify achievement trends and make instructional decisions in order to improve student outcomes. (2.2)
 - The school's use of results from standardized testing, end-of-year Acuity results, Teachers College reading assessments, running records, spelling inventories, teacher created assessments, math pre- and post-unit assessments, interim assessments, and end-of-unit tasks enables it to gauge individual student progress and group students for targeted instruction. Furthermore, teachers meet weekly to share individual student results, analyze practices, plan next steps for student sub-groups, and use assessments and feedback from grade level colleagues to inform flexible groupings in reading and math. In addition, grade level trends lead to revisions of lessons to target student needs. Teachers' use of rubrics aligned to Common Core Learning Standards enables them to provide clear feedback and next steps, resulting in student writing that demonstrates an increase in citing evidence from texts to support claims and opinions.
 - Teacher teams review rubrics collectively and review student work, to assess progress and to norm grading practices, resulting in a common understanding of what students need to achieve to meet grade level standards. Furthermore, rubrics are consistently used by teachers to gauge student progress on interim assessments as well as end-of-unit assessments, enabling revision of instructional strategies to improve student outcomes. This close analysis of student work has surfaced the need not only use grade level texts but to implement explicit teaching of reading strategies relative to students' reading levels to enable adequate progress and the development of independence and stamina in order to impact student outcomes on standardized exams. Furthermore, teacher teams indicate that results of end-of-unit tasks are used to revise subsequent units of study and that the data provides valuable insight into student achievement trends, enabling them to better address student needs. Thus, these practices are insuring a consistent approach across all classrooms to evaluate each lesson and checks for understanding, leading to immediate and purposeful adjustments to instruction to support students' learning.
- The school uses the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
 - School leaders currently use the Danielson framework focusing on Designing Coherent Instruction (1e), Questioning and Discussion Techniques (3b) and Using Assessment in Instruction (3d) to provide all teachers with specific comments, next steps, and intended support from administrators. Teachers' review of the feedback with the administration provides opportunities for discussion, reflection, and setting of next steps. Teachers shared that feedback and reciprocal dialogue among teachers,

is extremely helpful in improving teaching practices as evidenced by student work. Teachers indicated that they are now able to guide individual and groups of students to accomplish higher levels of work through the observation feedback and have seen student improvement in subsequent assignments. In addition, formal observations end with specific and clear verbal feedback and recommendations, along with a follow-up observation, all of which contributes to improving instructional practice. As a result, teachers are more reflective leading to professional growth among staff, and the refinement of classroom practice is supportive of increasing student performance.

- Structures for continued professional growth embedded in administrative practice foster tracking of teacher growth over time leading to pedagogic support directly related to school goals and to the instructional targets set by the school. Utilizing data collected from needs assessments, classroom observations, and conversations, specific professional development opportunities support improvement for teachers and paraprofessionals. After grade wide classroom visits, a follow up letter to the specific grade is written by the administration highlighting trends across the grade. A recent letter to the third grade teachers indicated that they were using open-ended questions to promote thinking while more work was needed in the area of student-to-student discussions. Teachers are also grouped for differentiated professional development based on grade specific and individual teacher needs, thus allowing staff to receive targeted professional development toward improving practice.
- Teacher teams engage in frequent structured inquiry to examine student work, adjust curriculum, and refine teaching practices, to promote the attainment of the school's instructional goals. (4.2)
 - Grade-level teacher teams meet weekly to modify and update curriculum maps based on challenges and successes of current lessons. Meetings focus on the school goals including the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards. Via teachers discussing lessons based on pre- and post- assessments, and the evaluation of data to determine student needs and strengths relative to requirements of the curriculum, teacher meetings show evidence of unit planning, task planning, and inquiry work. Additionally, teams focus on the workshop model to develop coherence of instruction for whole group mini-lessons and independent work. The first grade team is reviewing student writing samples and working with the Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teacher to help at-risk students meet the learning target of identifying and organizing information in their non-fiction unit "All About Books." During the meeting the team created an "All About Checklist" to help organize students' thinking during the writing workshop. Similarly, the fourth grade teacher team focused on revising the opinion/argument writing unit using a point based rubric that helps students focus on structures, development, and conventions of writing. As a result, conversations during teacher team meetings facilitate an understanding of student learning styles, and lessons are becoming more student centered and differentiated as evidenced by revisions to curriculum maps and teachers' lesson plans. . Additionally according to the 2011-2012 School Survey, 81% of teachers feel professional development is coherently focused and helping them achieve school goals, 77% of teachers enjoy working collaboratively, and

84% of teachers are eager to share information with one another regarding what does or does not work for classroom instruction.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the design of curricula and academic tasks to consistently support rigorous and cognitively engaging learning opportunities for all students. (1.1)
 - Curriculum maps for English Language Arts (ELA) are currently in the process of revision by each grade to ensure for appropriate planning and implementation. Additionally for math, teams are focusing on the instructional shifts to develop math units to supplement the Everyday Math curriculum. Staff are using assessment data and accessing EngageNY to further plan and adjust instructional alignment with the CCLS, focusing on reading informational texts (including science and social studies), developing academic vocabulary, and enhancing opinion writing. Evident in the curriculum maps are instructional shifts in literacy such as, reading and writing grounded in evidence from the text and fluency and understanding in math in order to assure that students develop key skills in order to reach grade level proficiency, and be college and career ready. However, teaching practices across all classes do not yet sufficiently show sufficient adaptations of the curricula to ensure challenging all students, especially higher achieving students. Therefore, the level of rigor of the implemented curriculum is not consistent across classrooms and as a result not all students are being challenged to perform at their highest potential, impacting the closing of the achievement gap.
- Strengthen teacher practice so that teachers consistently develop high level questions which engage students in high order thinking and promote high levels of student discussions. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curriculum and reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best as evidenced by the workshop model approach. Lesson planning and most classroom activities reflect a school-wide commitment to these beliefs through active participation in hands-on activities, cooperative grouping, and opportunities to demonstrate learning. However, teaching strategies, questioning, and routines, inconsistently offer multiple entry points for all students, including high-level learners and students with disabilities. During mini-lessons in some classes only a few students participated in the conversation and in other classes when students finished their work they did not have a plan to continue working independently. Additionally, not all activities appropriately challenged students, incited participation, or addressed students' strongest modalities, thus limiting learning. Hence, uneven practices minimize students' use of critical thinking to complete tasks as evidenced in student work and class participation.
- Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to students and families and provides supports to achieve them. (3.4)

- In response to the 2011-2012 School Survey results, the school is focusing on improving parent communication connected to a path for students' college and career readiness, and in an effort to provide families with timely feedback regarding student progress towards meeting school goals and expectations. At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year students and parents were introduced to a Student Responsibility Form outlining expected performance and consequences aligned to the New York City Discipline Code. Additionally, Interim Student Reports were introduced to facilitate better communication with parents regarding their children's performance. Also introduced this year is the Student Citizen of the Month Award. given to students in each class who demonstrate outstanding citizenship. Additional communication structures that have been added to further support ongoing school communication with parents include monthly calendars, newsletters, school leadership team meeting minutes, and teacher emails. Parents interviewed feel the staff is working hard to improve instruction, and have learned from the principal about the Common Core Learning Standards and Charlotte Danielson's Framework. However, they do not specifically understand what impact these expectations have on their children. Furthermore, although parents know their children's reading levels and sign off on nightly reading logs they could not articulate if their children were on grade level and what steps were being taken to ensure achieving grade level expectations. Similarly parents of high achieving students expressed the need for more challenging work to support the progress of their children. Parents also expressed a need to further improve communication regarding the school goals, with a specific focused on how to help their children reach these goals, the what and how of next steps and the tracking of their children's progress over time. In the absence ways to increase communication with parents that may include parent workshops that focus on strategies for parents to support learning at home, the collaboration between the school and home has not yet reached its full potential.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name:	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