

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Future Leaders Elementary School**

**31R074**

**211 Daniel Low Terrace  
Staten island  
NY 10301**

**Principal: Nicole Reid Christopher**

**Dates of review: March 13 - 14, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Erminia Claudio**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Future Leaders is an elementary school with 245 students from Pre-K through grade three. The school population comprises 27% Black, 57% Hispanic, 9% White, 5% Asian students and 2% other. The student body includes 27% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The curriculum is aligned to targeted State standards and academic tasks are designed to engage all students to close the achievement gap and promote college and career readiness in all grades. (1.1)
  - The school's curriculum places emphasis on the Chancellor's Instructional Expectations (CIE) and New York State's transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts (ELA) and math, is guided by Teachers College methodology of Balanced Literacy, Stephen Covey's *The Leader in Me Program* and a School wide Enrichment Model (SEM). Teachers in pre-kindergarten through third grade have engaged in one unit of study to date, that is aligned to the rigor of the CCSS in ELA and math. Units of study include essential questions, performance tasks, rubrics, pre and post assessments, a connection to *The Leader in Me Program* and small group work to support English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities (SWD). The Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) team gathers and analyzes student outcomes and trends and shares data with teachers and the principal to inform the planning. For example, the team found that higher level questioning was not consistent across classrooms. In response, teachers are deepening the use Depth of Knowledge (DOK) in planning for the next unit of study in ELA. The March 2012 Early Childhood ECERS-R Summary Report (which is used to assess the overall quality of a school's pre-kindergarten program) found that students had ample opportunities to interact with staff, but were not encouraged to talk through or explain their reasoning when solving problems. In response, the school created two units of study to support critical components aligned to the CCLS, language reasoning skills and problem solving. This was evident in the present unit of study, "World Outside Our Classroom" in which students were conversing with the teacher and classmates to explain the kinds of trucks they see in their neighborhood. *The Leader in Me Program*, which centers on seven habits of highly effective students, is infused across all curricula. Many classrooms visited had one of the seven habits in the teaching point; for example, "Non-fiction writers are proactive in using texts that support their topics of research." Each class has two bulletin boards; one for academic work and the other that ties into *The Leader in Me Program*. For example, one board "*What We Know About the Characters in Our Books*" and the other had "*Our Characters Can Be Proactive or Reactive.*" The school has a comprehensive art program affording student the opportunity to experience such art forms as dance, theater, media, and visual arts. Consequently, the well rounded curriculum offered by the school supports progression of conceptual understanding and skills over time, to prepare all students with college and career readiness skills.
- The school effectively uses and analyzes common data to gather information about students' progress and learning needs relative to the learning goals, in order to excel students' learning. (2.2)

- Teacher teams design common grade-wide curriculum and create pre and post assessments to track progress of skills and concepts taught in ELA, math, science and social studies. Teachers monitor students' understanding during the lesson and provide support as needed. In response to the 2011-2012 School Quality Review which indicated that the use of a standards-based rubric to evaluate student work was inconsistent across classrooms and grades, teacher teams created common rubrics aligned to tasks. All students, kindergarten through grade three have performance portfolios that house their work overtime for all subject areas. When this reviewer met with students, they shared their portfolios and were able to articulate what their next steps were to attain the next level or to deepen their work. For example, one student shared that he needed to add more supporting details from the text to receive a level 4, while another student shared that she needed to practice addition facts so she could get better at multi-step word problems. The school created mid-year progress reports for all students grades K-3 to inform parents of their children's progress in meeting benchmark standards. During the parent meeting, parents shared that the student progress report was very helpful in understanding their children's progress over time. The Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) teacher team, inclusive of the math and literacy coaches, data specialist and the English as a second language (ESL) teacher, spearheads the work of analyzing school data in ELA and math. All teachers across grades document their data in a school created "drill down" excel spreadsheet. The (CCLS) team analyzes the data by class and grade, identifies trends, graphs the findings and then looks at the curricula to see where skills, strategies and new material can be implemented. This team shares the analysis with all teachers, including the (ESL), academic intervention teacher (AIS), Special Education Teacher Support Service (SETSS) so that adjustments to the curricula and small group work can be made. For instance, as a result of the in-depth analysis of the 2011-2012 school-wide math data, the school purchased a new math program. Consequently, data gleaned from November to January supports significant growth in grades K-2. Of the 46 second grade students, there was a 29% decrease in level 1 students, 0% level 2 students and 25% of students at level 3.
  
- The principal's strategic use of resources and scheduling is aligned to the school's instructional goals to improve learning outcomes for all students. (1.3)
  - Two lead teachers with expertise in literacy and math were identified to be part-time coaches. The principal created flexible programming to accommodate both teachers to work with colleagues twice a week to model best practices, plan lessons and incorporate the CCLS into the curricula. Both teachers' assignments have a concentration of their subject expertise and both are on the CCLS teacher team, responsible for the analysis of data and implementation of the CCLS. A technology teacher works collaboratively with classroom teachers to support the acquisition of research skills through computer literacy, as evidenced in second grade students creating a PowerPoint to show the differences among suburban, urban and rural communities. A teacher leader coordinates an extensive school-wide enrichment program that fosters critical thinking through student inquiry. Students are given a survey in the

beginning of the year and asked to identify their three top choices; they ultimately have the opportunity to partake in three cycles throughout the school year. Such enrichment includes; culinary, book making, theater and volley ball. These enrichment opportunities culminate in presentations in which students share what they have learned as well as present artifacts and or do performances. As a result of the school not making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) on the New York State Early Childhood Assessment in math, the school purchased a new math program that has alignment to the Common Core Math Standards (CCMS). The principal created two after school programs to support the first cohort of students that will take the ELA and math assessments. These programs offer students additional academic support in literacy and math and are taught by the two lead teachers/coaches. The extended day program referred to as “skill sharpening” in line with *The Leader in Me* Program, *sharpening the saw*, is an eight week cycle that is skill driven. The school is presently focusing on math. Baseline data from pre and post assessments are used to create groups. The school is on its 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle and has seen an increase of 65% of students increasing one level of proficiency. The principal has created and programmed various teacher teams that meet at least twice a week. These teams include: grade teams, content specialist teams, and professional learning teams For example, a “Ramp-up” team met in the summer to plan professional development to support the Chancellor’s Instructional Expectations (CIE), analyzes feedback from the 2011-2012 school Quality Review and plan strategies to support the growing population of ELL students. In recognizing the importance of professional learning, the principal has purchased professional development to support her in the organization of being a single supervisor. As a result of the principal’s use of budget and resources, curriculum maps, lesson plans, student work products and professional collaborations support the schools overarching goal of aligning the curricula to the (CCLS) which prepares all students for college and career readiness.

- Teachers engage in shared inquiry based collaborations on student assessment data resulting in shifts in instructional practice and improvements in student learning. (4.2)
  - The principal has programmed several opportunities for teams of teachers to engage in inquiry work and curriculum planning. The CCLS team consisting of the ELA lead teacher/coach, the math lead teacher/coach, a first grade teacher/data specialist, an ESL teacher, and a SETSS teacher are considered the powerhouse team of the school because they are charged with analyzing school-wide data and making recommendations to the principal and their colleagues about curricula, resources and targeted instruction for at-risk students. This structure allows the staff to have a voice in instructional decision making across the school as well as build teacher capacity. Each grade has a team structure to support planning and inquiry work. For example, the first grade teacher team, inclusive of the ESL teacher, analyzed the first CCLS performance task to see what skills were mastered and what skills needed to be addressed in the second CCLS unit of study. It was established that students needed to add more details from the text. Teachers discussed the kinds of lessons they would incorporate into the next unit of study “informational writing about science.” Other team

structures include: ELA, math, special education, ELL and leadership and family engagement teams. On the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday entitled “Turnkey Thursdays” teachers can choose which team they would like to partake in and share their voice. Consequently, professional collaborations are a priority and students and faculty profit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as a teaching and learning community.

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

- Deepen the consistency of higher level questioning during the delivery of instruction in order to enrich student participation, thereby increasing opportunities for further development of critical thinking skills. (1.2)
  - Through a balanced approach to learning, inclusive of the arts, teachers plan and use a wide range of strategies, such as modeling, guided practice, application and feedback to engage students in a thinking curriculum. Lessons are implemented through the workshop model where mini lessons are delivered in a variety of modalities including the use of technology and SMARTboards, followed by guided work in small groups and one-on-one support allowing for individualized, targeted instruction. Teachers incorporate the essential question and make reference to Depth of Knowledge (DOK) in their curriculum maps. However, in some classrooms students were asked questions that did not lead to critical thinking. Only in a few classrooms did students have the opportunity to think critically, such as a kindergarten class where students were asked “What do you think pizza dough is made of? Turn and talk to your partner.” Consequently, the level of questioning does not universally lead to high levels of student thinking. Therefore, across classrooms, some students were not challenged to meet high levels of thinking, in order to support reflection and build critical thinking skills for all learners, including ELLs and SWDs.
  
- Increase the utilization of low inference and focused observations aligned to a research based framework to support teachers professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
  - The principal uses Danielson’s framework for teaching and an analysis of student artifacts to guide her formal observations. Teachers receive feedback on their teaching, analysis of student work and next steps. The principal meets with each teacher to go over personal goals and asks how she can support each teacher. A middle of the year survey was given to teachers to see what professional development they felt they needed. The school’s professional development plan was revised to incorporate co-teaching models and benchmarking learning targets. However, the principal is not yet immersed in short, frequent cycles of classroom visits to provide next steps to improve instruction. Thus, the lack of ongoing cycles of classroom observations on individual teaching practices, limits opportunities for the principal to further provide effective feedback to support teachers’ professional growth.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Future Leaders Elementary School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			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>