

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Walt Disney School  
Elementary School 160  
4140 Hutchinson River Parkway  
Bronx  
NY 10475

Principal: Lori Baker

Dates of review: December 11 - 12, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

The Walt Disney School is an elementary school with 400 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 57% Black, 38% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 34% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school's curricula are aligned to key Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to promote rigor and engage all learners in challenging tasks. (1.1)
  - Grade level curriculum maps and unit plans integrate the instructional shifts in literacy and math as per the Chancellor's Instructional Expectations (CIE). A common focus on questioning, discussion, listening and speaking and instructional texts that are purposefully chosen for their alignment to CCLS, deepen learning in all classrooms. The adoption of *Treasures* as a literacy text allows for emphasis on academic vocabulary while the school uses the *My Math* program to hone in on the demands of the instructional shifts in math. *Triumphs* is used to provide CCLS aligned instruction, with built in scaffolds for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). As a result, all students receive instruction that incorporates the CIE shifts and key standards.
  - Lesson plans reflect chosen standards, incorporate challenging tasks, and require students to demonstrate application to real life. Students in second grade were assigned a literacy task requiring them to compare inventors, describe their inventions, and discuss why the inventions are important to people's lives. A fourth grade math task involved students in creating multiplication equations using base 10 blocks to show representations of their equation and a Smart Board to demonstrate problem-solving steps. Across grades, teachers refer to the Depth of Knowledge Continuum (DOK) and HESS Cognitive Rigor Matrix in planning tasks. As a result, all students have access to curricula with challenging tasks that emphasize higher order thinking.
- The school provides a highly safe and nurturing environment that addresses students' social and emotional needs and promotes their academic and social growth. (1.4)
  - A Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) program reminds students of expected positive behaviors and provides Bee Bucks for purchases at the school store as a reward for those behaviors. To ensure all bussed students eat breakfast, school aides facilitating their eating in the classroom. Two safety agents, a teacher, three guidance counselors, and parent volunteers help to maintain a safe and welcoming environment. Student government members provide input in school decisions, including the school's use of grants to upgrade the auditorium and library. As a result, students thrive in an inclusive environment that provides for their needs and values their voice.
  - Teachers team up with each other to provide intervention services that support student learning. The school's data specialist serves as a positive intervention teacher and collaborates with administrators in monitoring student behaviors and providing professional development for staff and families. Other staff members engage parents in learning

by hosting workshops, sending texts to families re: missing homework, and initiating one-to-one conferences. As a result, students and adults adopt positive social and academic behaviors, as evidenced by few incidents of misconduct on the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) and improvement in student performance on assessments since September 2012.

- The principal makes highly strategic organizational decisions that align resources with the school's goals and result in improved student achievement. (1.3)
  - The principal funds an afterschool tutoring program, substitute teachers for professional development days, weekly teacher team meetings, teachers who serve as instructional leads for planning meetings, and tools such as Teach Scape, Engrade, E-chalk, laptops, Smart Boards and Smart Responders, to support teacher development and student and parent engagement. In collaboration with McGraw Hill, a career day event provides college and career readiness training for students. Space is assigned to Montefiore community center, which partners with the school to offer an enrichment program for students even during holidays. As a result of these supports, students engage in meaningful work that improves their achievement, as evidenced by work samples in their folders.
  - Hiring practices align teacher placement with student needs and teacher capacity to improve student achievement. Since September, a teacher was reassigned from the third grade to the first grade to strengthen early literacy skills for first grade students and a part time English as a second language (ESL) teacher was hired full time, to strengthen intervention services. To increase support for SWDs, the principal has created a special education inquiry team, trained the data specialist in Wilson interventions, and special education teachers assume additional responsibilities for extra work with students. As a result, there is a deep focus on meeting students' diverse needs.
- Staff and administrators analyze a variety of assessments to determine student strengths and weaknesses and implement interventions that improve performance. (2.2)
  - Benchmark and unit assessments are aligned with key standards and curricula to gauge student success on tasks linked to units of study. The school's grading policy is evident in classrooms and a consistent use of rubrics, including teacher made and task specific rubrics, assess student performance and provide for meaningful teacher comments that inform students of next steps. Teachers confer with students in all content areas, make notes on conference logs, and enter assessment data in Engrade, an electronic grading system, thus enabling them to track student progress. Consequently, all teachers are able to monitor student work and students receive effective feedback regarding their achievement.
  - The school administers Teachers' College, Acuity and Rally assessments in English language arts and math for students in grades 3, 4, and 5, periodic assessments for English language learners, and teacher made assessments for all grades to evaluate student progress towards monthly and annual goals. Teams of teachers meet weekly to analyze student

work and implement data driven adjustments to curriculum and instruction. During one meeting the team used a protocol that highlighted what the student did well and used the data to identify skills to be taught and/or re-taught and resources to support that work. As a result, students benefit from interventions that improve their growth, as evidenced by assessment data in binders and on student work.

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

- Refine the use of a research-based framework for evaluating teacher practice to insure alignment of professional development activities with goals for improved teacher development. (4.1)
  - At pre- and post-observation conferences, the principal and teacher examine observation data and student work to identify student and teacher needs. Short, frequent cycles of observation are used to provide teachers, including new teachers, with feedback, including next steps via e-mails, hand-delivered reports, and one-to-one conversations. However, feedback from the cycles of observation is tied mainly to the few components of the common teaching framework (classroom environment and questioning) evaluated to date. As a result, teacher development is limited by a lack of comprehensive data to evaluate their practice across a broad range of performance domains.
  - The school uses the Danielson's framework to articulate common expectations for teacher practice and provide teachers with oral and written feedback that specifies strengths and next steps, and the principal engages teachers in "data meetings" that clarify students' instructional needs and expectations around classroom pedagogy. However, there is limited focus on goals that are specific to each teacher's needs and on focused professional development plans to address those needs. As a result, teachers lack professional development that is individualized and aligned to professional goals focused on elevating their practice.
- Improve the alignment of teaching practices with the school's beliefs about how students learn best, to maximize student thinking and participation in learning tasks. (1.2)
  - The principal implements protocols to support the school's beliefs about how students learn best. For example, teachers use the workshop model of instruction, flexible grouping, and conferencing, to engage students in tasks that are aligned with curricula. Teachers and paraprofessionals focus on specific students in classrooms, with special attention to English language learners and SWDs. However, at times, support is limited to an adult sitting next to the students, with little meaningful interaction. As a result, teaching practices do not incorporate scaffolds that enable all learners to succeed.
  - In most classrooms, discussions among students allow for sharing of thinking and ideas. Teachers provide prompts orally and via discussion cards, during questioning students about tasks or texts students take turns responding. However, in some classrooms students are not invited to comment on responses given by peers in content-area discussions. As a result, there are missed opportunities to refine student thinking and fully engage all students in meaningful discussions.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Walt Disney 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>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed