

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Juan Ponce De Leon School**

**Elementary School 161**

**628 Tinton Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10455**

**Principal: Eliamarie Soto**

**Dates of review: February 12-13, 2013**

**Lead Reviewers: Yolanda Torres/  
William Roberts (NYSEd)**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Juan Ponce De Leon is an elementary school with 549 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 23% Black, 74% Hispanic, 2.4% White, 1% American Indian, 0.4% Asian, and 0.2% Native Hawaiian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 28% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school's culture creates a positive learning environment that supports the academic and social-emotional growth of all students. (1.4)
  - School leaders and staff have collaboratively created a safe environment that is responsive to the social emotional needs of all students. Through ongoing meetings spanning from school-wide to classroom community forums, students understand the qualities of positive behavior by enunciating that in order to be recognized and acknowledged, there are three important steps to take: *“Act like a star. Look like a star. Be a star.”* This school-wide motto is the driving motivation that has students talking about how respect, learning and good attendance contribute to their social emotional growth and academic success. As students speak to these expectations, their daily actions with one another in classroom discussions, peer-to-peer assessments, and assemblies afford them opportunities to share ideas and their points of view, thus giving them a voice of expression in a risk-free environment. Students overwhelmingly indicate that their teachers are great because they serve as “examples” or role models always willing to help them with their problems. In addition to their teachers, support personnel provides them with one-on-one or small group guidance on a frequent basis leading to reflective conversations that inform them on making favorable decisions that positively impact on their daily interactions and school work. School leaders have coordinated extracurricular activities such as basketball, track & field, chess, cheerleading and Boy Scouts to provide students with additional outlets in areas of interest so they can excel and continue developing physically and mentally.
- School leaders are beginning to make organizational decisions in order to meet the needs of all students as evidenced by students producing more meaningful work. (1.3)

The budget is closely monitored to ensure that all decisions effectively support instructional goals that focus on the needs of students, especially English language learners and students with disabilities. Weekly teacher team meetings afford teachers the opportunity to work collaboratively looking at student work, targeting trends by grade, and identifying the skills students need for instructional improvement. In turn, their work guides them to identify practices that can contribute to emerging instructional coherence and improvement across classrooms. Additionally, the leadership hired instructional coaches and consultants to address the school-wide instructional goals and teacher professional development needs resulting in individualized support for professional growth and student academic improvement. Ongoing professional development sessions on scaffolding classroom practices provide teachers with another layer of support to address the instructional needs of all students and hone in on their learning styles for improved academic achievement. In order to close the achievement gap and support the academic and/or social emotional needs of specific student groupings, the leadership instituted a daily period, known as ‘Frozen Time’ when all

staff, teachers and support personnel work with students in small groups or one-on-one focused on the skills that support students' well-being and academic productivity. Teachers meet to discuss goals and the structure of the student groupings leading to in-depth planning, implementation of interventions, and more meaningful student work products.

- The use of a variety of assessment tools leads to instructional adjustments and targeted small groups for improved student progress. (2.2)
  - Teachers use a variety of assessments such as Acuity and Fountas and Pinnell benchmarks to plan targeted, small group instruction. Teachers conduct ongoing conferences with students to formatively assess students' vocabulary and critical thinking development as they answer higher order questions and/or engage with teachers in meaningful discussions on informational texts, writing pieces or evaluation of work via the use of rubrics. Teacher team meetings focus on the analysis of student work in order to identify trends in skills deficit in reading and math. Additionally, during 'Frozen Time,' teachers, inclusive of support personnel, use protocols to observe and listen to students read to determine their needs as they build stamina which is a school-wide focus for literacy and critical thinking improvement. Furthermore, rubrics provide teachers and students another lens of assessing finished work products resulting in students' self-assessment and better understanding of where they are in their learning process. As a result of these assessment practices, teachers are able to agree on next instructional steps and adjustments needed to ensure that decisions made lead to students' academic progress.

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

- Develop the units of study and academic tasks to ensure that all students are engaged in rigorous academic tasks that promote higher order thinking skills. (1.1)
  - The school adopts units of study connected to world situations such as environmental issues with scaffolded practices to engage students, inclusive of English language learners and students with disabilities. As teachers plan their lessons, their intent is to challenge students to think critically and conceptualize what the academic task calls for in order to provide evidence of their thinking. However, the lack of consistent rigorous tasks and effective teaching practices that can provide students with opportunities to anchor new information so as to make appropriate connections to real world situations lead to uneven learning outcomes from classroom to classroom.
  - Teachers use student work and data to focus on designing tasks and resources specifically for English language learners and students with disabilities that afford these students with opportunities to develop their critical thinking skills via the aid of a variety of resources. In addition, they look at trends across grades to better understand students' instructional needs resulting in some adjustment in classroom task activities. In spite of the adjustment and focus on instructional supports, student cognitive engagement is not consistent nor is it equitable for all students. Students with disabilities continue to struggle.

- Ensure that, as teachers customize their plans and execute their lessons, their questioning techniques challenge and engage students at their appropriate levels. (1.2)
  - Instructional leads meet with teachers to follow up with discussions on effective strategies that teachers can incorporate in their lessons to involve and engage all students in performance tasks that access their thinking. Subsequently, teachers plan lessons that scaffold questioning techniques and utilize graphic organizers that motivate students to learn and discover, hence, extend their thinking and understanding of the skills and concepts at hand. In some classrooms, teachers address students' multiple entry points via these techniques. However, in other classrooms, the instruction is generic, a one-size-fits-all approach, thus limiting students' access to curricula and challenging tasks. Although lesson plans and learning objectives attempt to reflect the Common Core standards that are being addressed, there is a misalignment between these instructional practices and the CCLS learning expectations leading to inconsistent levels of student thinking and participation across grades and content areas.
  
- Strengthen feedback to teachers consistently aligned to a research-based teaching framework to promote professional growth and teacher reflection. (4.1)
  - The school is part of the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot Program and uses the Danielson Framework to guide their work in the improvement of teacher practices. School leaders engage in targeted and frequent classroom observations to provide teachers with timely feedback for pedagogical improvement. These low inference observations are uploaded into ARIS Learn in order to track and monitor trends in professional growth. School leaders hold individual meetings with teachers to provide vital information from these observations aligned to the Danielson rubric engaging them in thoughtful conversations leading to the improvement of teaching craft. As these data talks ensue, teachers reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement resulting in some kind of tiered professional development. This reflection of practice also leads to teachers identifying students' accomplishments during the lessons and what decisions and/or adjustments they must make to help students gain access to the next level of learning. Although these structures are in place, the feedback provided to teachers lacks promotion of consistent rigor as evidenced by uneven levels of improvement in lesson plans, classroom observations and student work.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Juan Ponce De Leon School	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>