

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**New Venture Academy**

**Middle School X219**

**3630 Third Avenue  
Bronx NY 10456**

**Principal: Dominic Cipollone**

**Dates of review: May 7- 8, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito**

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

### **Information about the school**

New Venture Academy is a middle school with 412 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 43% Black, 57% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 52.0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48.0%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 89.0%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school fosters a supportive culture that enhances the personal development of students, improving their learning environment. (1.4)
  - The school's support staff works closely with teachers and administration to ensure that the school environment focuses on communication and safety, based on last year's School Survey. Counselors meet with individual students to provide guidance on learning habits and skills that support academic and personal behaviors. The school uses a Student Discipline Tracker to track incidents, consequences and referrals. The school's code of conduct and expectations are centered on Respect, Organization, Acceptance, Responsibility and Safety. This supports a culture that welcomes student voice. Teachers recommend students for a "student of the month" celebration based on the expectations outlined. As a result, suspension rates have declined from 150 to 82 presently. Additionally, progress reports sent to students reveals that passing rates have improved since the last marking period from 69.9% to 72.4 % passing rate, thus enabling teachers to focus on more instructional strategies in classrooms.
  - The school leadership has systems in place so that all students are known well by adults in the building. A strong guidance team implements positive behavioral interventions in collaboration with the dean, parent coordinator and other support staff members. They also work closely with families and students on the high school transition process. The school has restructured the role of the dean in order to dedicate more time to develop systems that provide a wide range of interventions for students and families in collaboration with other support staff and administration. Consequently, the school's efforts regarding discipline and social-emotional learning are better aligned. A student behavior management process was developed to coordinate supports and interventions. As a result, students benefit from the collaborative efforts of guidance counselors, social workers and teachers who coordinate programs and assemblies that teach Respect for All and Anti-Bullying. These structures have resulted in building a more cohesive culture that supports students academically. Students are recognized monthly for their academics, attendance and behavior. One student shared "Don't Give Up" is the message in our school. "We Are Going to College".
- The principal effectively uses resources that align to the school's goals, resulting in meaningful student work products. (1.3)
  - The school aligns resources to support the school's professional development plan in literacy and mathematics that align with the school's stated goals. This year, teachers receive extensive support with planning and coaching around questioning techniques and strategies for differentiation from consultants and partnerships, supported by the network. One of the partnerships with City College, provides on-site support to staff that improves teaching practices and builds on content knowledge across the grades. Furthermore, during the classroom visits, one teacher made effective use of technology by using iPads during a read aloud that focused on author's purpose and story elements.

Students were highly engaged and used rich language during the discussion with their peers. As a result, the teacher made good use of checking student responses on the iPad which enabled her to target specific student needs. These resources lift the level of student outcomes as evident in student work samples that include double journal entries, persuasive essays and author studies that use rich vocabulary and language used during instruction to strengthen student writing.

- The leadership structures weekly opportunities for teacher teams to meet and discuss curricula and instruction. In one team, teachers read an article and used it a guide to review student work, using norms and protocols for their discussion. As a result, teachers revise their units, using the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), to better engage their students in challenging academic tasks across content areas. For example, in math classrooms students are writing reflections about transformations and math autobiographies that help students make connections to their lives thus demonstrating meaningful work products.
- Across classrooms, teachers use assessments that align to the curricula and enable them to make adjustments at the classroom level that improve learning outcomes for students. (2.2)
  - Teachers use a wide range of assessments that inform the progress of the school's goals. Teachers review and analyze Acuity assessments, student work samples, baseline data and reading levels to determine skills and priorities based on the CCLS. As a result of this collaborative team analysis, teachers identified writing and vocabulary as one of the areas that needs attention across the content areas and grade levels. The school has developed at least 5 literacy units of study that are aligned to the CCLS that infuse content and language objectives and foster language development in meaningful ways. Teachers also make adjustments and revisions to their units and lessons during their planning meetings. They incorporate strategies for ELL students and SWD. These changes are evident in their lesson plans. For example, teachers use questioning techniques to foster critical thinking skills during lessons that are planned collaboratively. Teachers also make adjustments in their lesson plans to include strategies that support various student groups, based on formative assessments reviewed. For example, in math classrooms, students work in groups and discuss their strategies for problem solving with their peers using rubrics and checklists to guide their work. Consequently, students are able to explain their thinking orally and in writing, using academic language that is relevant to the specific content area being taught. Across classrooms, teachers provide students with feedback and use language and content strategies that help students reflect and focus on their learning and adjust their goals throughout the year. Acuity results and progress reports reflect improvements in mastery of standards from the fall to the spring.

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

- Deepen the quality of academic tasks to effectively challenge all students and successfully close the achievement gap. (1.1)

- The school has collaboratively organized teams that have begun to align curriculum to the CCLS using tools from the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Research-Based Instructional Strategies (RBIS) from Marzano used for planning and designing lessons and units. In English Language Arts, the school has exceeded the citywide expectations by developing at least 5 units of study that emphasize key ideas aligned to the CCLS. Some of these include informational reading and writing and argumentative discourse with rubrics and guiding questions to scaffold the content. In mathematics, they have also developed two CCLS units and work collaboratively with the network and consultants to infuse language and content strategies referring to Webb's Depth of Knowledge to provide additional supports for students as evident in some classrooms that use rigorous tasks that build on number sense and fluency to engage students. However, the development of rigorous tasks and critical thinking skills across content areas and grade levels is still developing, as teachers continue to receive professional development that facilitates their understanding of the shifts in literacy and mathematics. In addition, tasks do not have sufficient entry points for all learners across content areas. Many English language learners do not have access to appropriate supports to effectively engage in rigorous tasks. Hence, the impact of this work is not yet evident across classrooms in student work samples, limiting the progress of all students.
- Expand the use of data to further develop teaching practices that promote academic rigor and improve student outcomes for all learners. (1.2)
  - The school uses a workshop model that provides students with opportunities to practice strategies and skills that are taught during the mini-lessons. In addition, the school incorporates the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model as a common teaching framework across the grades and content areas. During classroom visits, there was consistent evidence of content and language objectives posted on charts, SMART boards and lesson plans. Teachers use various questioning techniques to check for understanding and unpack key concepts that are being taught. The school has tried to align the Danielson Framework with the SIOP model and Literacy First Initiatives. Some students can explain how the content and language objectives assist them with understanding the goals of the lesson. In one social studies lesson, students were working with peers discussing non-violent tactics used during the Civil Rights Movement. They used stems to guide their thinking such as, "I see, I think, I wonder", and engage in meaningful learning experiences with reading and writing that deepen their understanding of key concepts in social studies. However, those experiences are not consistently evident across classrooms yet. Although students are reading and writing more non-fiction such as informational and argumentative writing, the depth of concepts and content are not evident in student work samples throughout the school. Additionally, there is a lack of scaffolding for students who are struggling with grade level content, due to language or academic barriers and students who are more advanced, whose needs are not being met effectively as they are currently not challenged. Consequently, all students are not making sufficient progress evidenced in various classrooms with English language learners. Many of these students are compliant but lack the pedagogical supports and resources needed to access content and language effectively.

- Develop consistency in the use of observation tools to promote greater coherence of instructional practices and professional growth. (4.1)
  - The leadership has developed a schedule to organize formal and informal observations for staff members in an effort to provide feedback for improvement. This work is also outlined in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan which identifies the areas of focus using the Danielson Framework to gauge instructional expectations. However, a review of formal and informal feedback reveals that there is a lack of alignment of the feedback to the school's stated goals. The feedback provided to teachers is usually general and does not consistently provide clear expectations and specific guidance to improve teaching practices across the school. Sometimes feedback includes checklists that address the environment and not specific teaching practices outlined in the school's goals. The administrative team currently does not use the stated research based framework to provide teachers with regular meaningful feedback. In addition, there is not sufficient and timely feedback provided to all teachers around data and student work, although some administrators have had some conversations during grade meetings. There is a wide range of feedback in terms of focus amongst the administrative team. Therefore, there are inconsistent opportunities for teachers to implement strategies that promote professional growth and improve teaching practices across the school.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: New Venture Academy	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>