

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Young Leaders Elementary School**

**Elementary School 369**

**468 East 140<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Bronx**

**NY 10454**

**Principal: Dr. Karen Collins**

**Dates of review: April 9-10, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Young Leaders Elementary School is an elementary school with 296 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 16% Black, 79% Hispanic and 4% White students. The student body includes 34% English language learners and 14% 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 93.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school climate is a positive learning environment, with adults who collaborate to implement a range of support services that address students' academic and social emotional needs. (1.4)
  - School leaders, in concert with teachers, use the School Survey, referrals and other behavioral indicators to focus on students' social emotional safety and classroom community building. Teams focused on behavioral interventions and attendance meet regularly to discuss at-risk students and decide on preventative measures that will ensure students' successful access to positive daily learning experiences. The implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) program serves as a supportive structure, resulting in the reinforcement of respect and self-reflection amongst students. Adults get to know students very well and bond with them by creating a common understanding of the importance of being respectful and responsible, which contributes to a safe learning environment. Additionally, students have opportunities to voice their concerns about issues around bullying and respect, as well as share positive interactions with administrators and other adults during assemblies and classroom community forums. Teachers have collaborated in the development of behavioral expectations in and out of school and post charts in hallways and classrooms in child-friendly language that reminds students of these expectations. As a result, the school has created an environment where appropriate behaviors are celebrated regularly, with students receiving awards such as PBIS tickets that they can use to "buy" items at the PBIS school store.
- Teacher teams and instructional coaches collaboratively analyze student work and data, leading to teaching practices that support students' academic progress and promote teacher development. (4.2)
  - Teacher teams meet regularly with coaches to analyze student work and assessment data, as they discuss specific instructional strategies needed to help students overcome the struggles they face in their work. Teachers share their own perspectives on how students answer questions or on how they can connect details into their writing. These discussions challenge teachers to think of ways to address the deficits identified by the data and customize lessons to meet the differentiated needs of struggling students. Teachers welcome these weekly interactions with their colleagues because of their ability to share their practices and/or problem solve as a team, in order to figure out what it will take to help students succeed academically. In addition, teachers indicate that since these conversations lead to ongoing reflection on their own practices, they constantly support each other by identifying interventions that have worked well in their classrooms. These honest conversations lead to teacher empowerment, the improvement of teacher practice and positive impact on student progress, as evidenced by teacher reports of students demonstrating increased stamina in reading and writing.

- School leaders make strategic decisions in the use of staff and other resources to support the implementation of instructional strategies that address students' needs for academic improvement. (1.3)
  - The school-wide schedule provides teachers with opportunities to meet regularly and maximize on their collaborative discussions. These daily conversations lead to teachers identifying grade and/or content trends that inform their practice. Cluster teachers meet in cycles with classroom teachers to align their planning to the unit themes and provide support and extension tasks that help bolster students' learning through technology and the arts. The leadership hired an additional coach to ensure that teachers are supported in English language arts as well as in math. Teachers meet regularly with coaches to discuss student work and determine the next steps to ensure that student groups, especially English language learners and students with disabilities, progress appropriately with instruction that targets their needs and offers multiple entry points to support them in completing rigorous tasks. As a result, all students are supported in accordance their needs for improvement or enrichment, with teachers, coaches and out-of classroom personnel strategically assigned to manageable groups of students, for intensive strategic work.

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

- Revisit the alignment between curricula and the delivery of instruction to ensure that rigorous learning is consistently evident in all classrooms, leading to increased student achievement. (1.1)
  - The school uses Teachers' College units of study aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and is developing tools in math to ensure that the foundational skills are addressed for academic improvement. Additionally, the school-wide focus on color-coded charts and higher order questions to engage students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, in tasks that are challenging in nature, is evidently developing throughout the school. Some teachers' lesson plans show multiple pathways to reach and engage students in rigorous thinking opportunities, while other teachers are being supported in this endeavor by mentors and coaches. However, there is little evidence of attention to the instructional shifts related to the Chancellor's Instructional Expectations (CIE). As a result, students do not have access to curricula that is aligned to CCLS across content areas and unit maps do not consistently reflect tasks that lead to intellectual independence and self-assessment.
- Refine instructional practices to insure alignment to curricula and promote a common understanding of research based strategies that lead to engagement of students at their multiple entry points. (1.2)
  - As teachers plan their lessons based on feedback from their discussions of student work as well as feedback provided by the administration, they use protocols such as think sheets and charts as supportive reference tools that students can rely on for academic progress. These interactive

materials are used to motivate student learning so that students can feel invested in their own learning. Strategy group interventions as well as co-teaching practices provide students with additional opportunities to engage in differentiated and scaffolded tasks to further their learning. However, although the school is trying to create a balanced learning process via a common teaching framework to allow all students, inclusive of English language learners and students with disabilities, to interact with others in groups and/or work independently, most students have yet to conceptualize and articulate higher order thinking in their work, leading to limited progress in their learning.

- Strengthen assessment practices so that feedback from assessments informs strategic planning and results in revisions to instruction and curricula that promote academic progress for all students. (2.2)
  - The school uses a variety of assessment tools such as Foundations, Spelling Inventory, running records and benchmarked formative protocols to collect data on an ongoing basis, to compare and measure academic growth. Conference notes and examinations of student work provide additional data to inform teacher practice. The school-wide grading policy has been re-vamped to align it with the four-tiered rating system from the state exams and improve coherence across school level and statewide assessments. In addition, rubric-based evaluations of student work are another source of feedback that leads to much reflection on where students are in relation to learning goals and targets and what they need to do next to improve their performance. School leaders acknowledge that, as a result of their analysis of running records and other assessment data, they are beginning to revise curricula and modify instruction for students who are still developing their skills, especially in the area of vocabulary development. With that said, there is still inconsistent evidence that across grades and content areas, all teachers use assessment data to address and build on skills needed for improvement in overall academic achievement by all students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Young 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>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed