



Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Ronald E. McNair

Elementary School K005

**820 Hancock Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Lena Gates

Dates of review: January 21 - 24, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Santiago

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Ronald E. McNair is an elementary school with 360 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 82% Black, 13% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has aligned the curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in order to promote rigorous instruction and academic achievement for all students. (1.1)
 - This year the school has implemented the city-wide curriculum Expeditionary Learning for English language arts (ELA) and Go Math for math, which are aligned to the CCLS. Key standards identified for school-wide focus include increasing volume in writing and the use of academic vocabulary in all subject areas. In addition, the school is emphasizing finding text based evidence to support a position and integrating the citywide instructional shifts across the curricula. These are evident in most curriculum maps across the school. For example, in the lower grades, students are required to practice subtracting two digit numerals with regrouping followed by individual students explaining the concept and process of the operations using math terms during their presentations. In the science curriculum, tasks require students to work in groups conducting experiments to determine the density of liquids followed by students using science vocabulary to share their findings verbally and in writing with their peers. In the ELA curriculum, students are required to look for clues in articles such as “Hawaii’s Endangered Happy Face” to support the main idea. These tasks promote academic language usage and thinking and deepen the levels of discussions to maximize learning. In addition, the school’s collaboration with the National Urban Alliance (NUA) that emphasizes the use of student culture to motivate the learner and the use of thinking maps to organize thoughts, has generated greater student participation, which includes students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs) and challenges all students with more rigorous and engaging activities to enrich their learning and accelerate achievement.
- Teachers use formative and summative assessments and ongoing checks for understanding that provide data to identify student learning needs, adjust instruction and support improved student mastery. (2.2)
 - The school captures and analyses all summative data and has established a data collection room for teacher collaboration around data results for curricula and instructional planning. Teachers meet weekly to review State and benchmark item analysis results to determine implications for teaching across the grades. Two skills found to be in need of improvement included identifying key ideas from details in informational text and writing constructive responses. This resulted in teachers engaged in vertical planning to target these skills in the early childhood grades. Teachers also gather data in binders that include baseline information to determine measures of student learning (MOSL), unit tests in English language arts and math, rubrics and teacher designed tests. This data is used to evaluate student progress at the team and classroom levels, in order to inform next steps for teaching and identify students in need of intervention. In addition, teachers work with individual and groups of students to determine levels of student mastery

of curriculum standards and provide feedback for their next steps. Student groups are established and instructional adjustments are made based on the outcomes of data collected. This was evidenced throughout the school where teachers sat with selected students from various groups to offer guidance in completing assigned tasks as well as ascertain their academic levels of strengths and areas of need. Teachers also check for understanding through questioning, peer discussions and group and class share outs. For example, in a lower grade class during review of a previous lesson, the teacher asked students questions pertaining to the parts of a plant and their function. After “turn and talk” discussions with their peers, individual students shared answers with the whole class as the teacher noted the accuracy of the responses. Furthermore, students’ use of rubrics to self-assess their task performance in math and writing enables them to recognize their achievement levels and promotes ownership for continued learning. This has led to students stating and being aware of their goals to increase academic progress.

- The principal has made organizational decisions to support school-wide goals in order to increase levels of student achievement. (1.3)
 - In response to the school’s priority goals to improve instruction and increase student performance in literacy and math, the school allocated funds to hire a data specialist consultant to work with teachers twice weekly to analyze summative and formative data and use the information to plan instruction to raise the levels of student achievement. Using funds received from a RESO “A” grant totaling \$278,000, the school purchased additional SMARTboards, classroom computers and upgraded the computer lab to increase the use of technology as a tool for learning. In efforts to increase professional collaborations, the principal allocated time, using a School Based Option (SBO), for teachers to meet in teams at least twice weekly to align curriculum, analyze assessments, student work and plan instruction for targeted population students, such as students identified in need of intensive academic support. Teachers work with the students after school and on Saturdays to support the students’ academic growth and increase their achievement. Additionally, the principal budgeted funds to hire substitute teachers to enable classroom teachers to attend workshops at in-house and outside venues and turn-key the information to their colleagues. For example, selected teachers visited a middle school within the district to review and discuss the school’s exemplary teacher comments and next steps on student work products to generate higher order thinking and increase volume in writing. Subsequently, the visiting teachers shared the experience and learning with their colleagues during their teacher team meetings. These teacher interactions and the sharing of best practices have led to teachers enhancing their repertoire of strategies such as the effective use of teacher feedback to maximize the learning. Consequently, students are making gains in English language arts and math as evidenced by increased performance on unit and benchmark assessments over the results of baseline assessments administered in the fall and have led to teachers expressing that they feel supported in their professional development.
- The school has created a safe and respectful learning environment that nurtures and supports students’ social and academic growth. (1.4)

- In response to concerns raised in the annual NYC School Survey, the school adopted various initiatives that include 'The Leader in Me Program' to create a positive and respectful school culture. Teachers received training and materials to implement the program that focuses on developing the seven habits of effective leaders via activities and opportunities that promote student leadership such as, student led Town Hall meetings, conferences and morning announcements. In addition, the Student Government that meets weekly to discuss and offer input in decisions affecting the school community. For example, after receiving complaints from students regarding the cleanliness of the student bathrooms, the Student Government initiated a "Cleaner School" campaign that has resulted in all students participating in the school-wide effort to maintain a clean school environment. The school also developed 'The Reader in Me Program' to provide additional time for students who are not reading at home to engage in reading with the help of paraprofessionals assigned to the students. Additionally, in order to meet the needs of nearly one third of the student population who live in temporary housing, the school has developed an action plan headed by the assistant principal, School Based Support Team (SBST) and the family worker to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps coordinate student services and resources to support the student's attendance, social, emotional and academic growth. For example, when a student is chronically absent from school, support personnel convenes meetings with the parents and families to find out the reasons for the absences and offer support such as daily "wake up" calls, home visits by the family worker and tutoring services to ensure students make academic progress. This, along with the school's affiliations such as 'Innovations' a technology based program that connects students via telephone with tutors from the business community and 'IT Learning' that tracks students' progress and is accessible to parents, have contributed to greater student engagement and a decrease in truancy and the number of incidents and suspensions to date ,over last year. Consequently, students and parents express that they feel safe and respected in the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop greater consistency in instructional tasks that include multiple entry points at high levels to address the instructional needs of all students and support deep thinking in preparation for college and careers. (1.2)
 - The school uses the Danielson Framework across the grades and subscribes to the belief that children learn best through teacher modeling and tasks that generate higher order thinking through discussions and address individual student needs using multiple entry points. This was evidenced in some classrooms via lesson activities, questioning and student work products. For example, in a few classrooms there were visuals and leveled reading materials and in one classroom students were partnered with ELLs to help translate articles for their peers to scaffold the learning. The teacher also accessed language translation resources from the internet to accommodate the ELLs. However, these practices were not consistent throughout the school. In some classrooms visited, lessons were conducted mostly in whole group settings and discussions

were mainly teacher dominated which generated minimally thoughtful conversations and student interactions with few opportunities for students, including student subgroups, to engage in rigorous learning tasks. Additionally, student folders and notebooks did not consistently address differentiated needs for all students. Furthermore, in some classrooms, there was evidence of uneven levels of student interactions in meaningful discussions. For example, in one math classroom students spent most of the time during the lesson completing drill exercises silently and individually from a worksheet, thus limiting the understanding and skill development needed to support the academic growth for all students in preparation for college and careers.

- Implement systems across all content areas to evaluate school-wide initiatives, programs and policies in order to adjust practices and ensure student achievement across subject areas and teams. (5.1)
 - School leaders regularly review school and classroom data using benchmark assessments and analyze data results from summative State exams, unit tests in literacy and math and formative assessments aligned to the CCLS, in order to monitor progress at the classroom and school levels. The principal and assistant principal conduct observations and daily walkthroughs to determine levels of implementation of the curriculum and assess the quality of instructional practices using the Danielson Framework across the school. Teachers engage in collegial inter-visitations and visit other schools to share best practices for improved instruction and student achievement. Further, the principal and the assistant principal meet with teachers one on one to discuss student performance and identified areas for professional growth. As a result, school leaders and teacher leaders adjust curriculum and instruction in English language arts and math based on the outcomes. However, systems and structures for data analysis and evaluation of school-wide instructional protocols in social studies and science are not yet fully implemented to maximize efficacy. In addition, while school leaders sit in on inquiry team meetings occasionally, systems to evaluate the quality of teacher team work are not yet in place. The lack of structures across all subject areas to monitor students' progress decreases opportunities to adjust curricula, target resources and inform teachers' instructional practices to increase student achievement in all content areas.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Ronald E. McNair	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports 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 those expectations?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach 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					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed