



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Robert Fulton

Elementary/Middle School K008

**37 Hicks Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201**

Principal: Seth Phillips

Dates of review: February 3-4, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Robert Fulton is an elementary/middle school with 848 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 12% Hispanic, 60% White, 6% Asian and 6% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers strategically align curricula in all subject areas, coherently integrating instructional shifts and higher order thinking skills, thus ensuring that all students have access to demanding tasks. (1.1)
 - The school continues to develop its own curricula in the areas of English language arts, social studies and science. They utilize and adapt other curricula resources, such as *Bridges for Mathematics*, that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and recognize the instructional shifts such as reading more complex texts, emphasizing deeper conceptual understanding, and strengthening students' academic language. In order to ensure coherence from grade to grade in the determination of skill mastery and development of units of study with rigorous tasks, teachers review materials collaboratively and ask, "What's the same? What's different?" and "What are students asked to do?" Vertical teacher teams across content areas constantly refer to the CCL S to make sure there is a logical elevation of skills from grade to grade, using student work samples and unit artifacts to inform the development of additional units that promote college and career readiness. The principal refers to this as "shining the apple". This has allowed the school to provide a well-defined and balanced curricula supported by the demanding standards of the Common Core, leading to a clear path for students' movement towards college and career readiness, as evidenced by the school's score of "B" in the student performance component of the most recent Progress Report.
 - Teachers focus on rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills when planning units of study and performance tasks, and pay close attention to the quality of questions and how to scaffold them in order to allow students to participate in rigorous discussions that include high levels of choice and autonomy. For example, a grade 7 debate unit in English Language Arts required students to write a case study to explore both sides of an issue and argue for a specific side, based on the guiding question, "What can be learned from investigating multiple sides of an issue?" Utilizing a case study rubric, students worked in pairs to prepare an opening and closing statement, while formulating on-demand questions for the opposition. Similar tasks in units across content areas enable all students to access curricula that allow them to use higher order thinking skills to create their own meaning, integrate multiple skills in completing tasks and produce high quality work with real-life applications.
- The school's belief system about how students learn best is informed by the Danielson Framework and aligned to curricula and instructional practices that provide multiple pathways for all students to produce high quality work. (1.2)
 - Instructional practices in almost all classrooms reflect the school's belief that students learn best when they experience success, lessons are integrated across disciplines, and students are motivated to complete tasks that target autonomy, purpose and mastery. Thus the school has

strengthened its work with Danielson's Framework in Domain 2, the classroom environment, and Domain 3, instruction, in order to systemically create opportunities for students to demonstrate their ability to use higher order skills such as research, analyze, and synthesize text. For example, in a grade 1 class students discussed "tens" and "ones" but referred to them as "presents" and "parcels", and needed to demonstrate at least 2 ways in which they could represent the number 37, using whiteboards. Teacher teams discuss the quality of questions and student participation and discussion techniques, with the result that in a vast majority of classrooms students receive long periods of practice time after short lessons that include open ended questions, leading to peer/small group discussions. Teachers circulate amongst groups in order to monitor student work and provide probing questions to advance students' thinking. This leads to all students being immersed in activities that show strong alignment between instructional practices, curricula, and the school's belief system about how to maximize student learning.

- Across classrooms, common instructional practices such as student groups, mini lessons, choice options, instructional charts, monitoring student behavior, and teachers conferring with students, result in the engagement of all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, in challenging tasks. For example, during a grade 3 Integrated Co-Teaching class, some students were placed in groups and several worked independently to continue reading their informational texts about elephants and complete their reading logs. Both teachers were involved in small group instruction, based on prior assessment, thus providing additional strategy lessons to support students' ability to "hold on to" large amounts of text as well as extract details to support their thinking. Using a chart displayed in the classroom to support nonfiction reading, students worked to determine, as one student stated, "What the author wants us to absorb." In another class, a student shared that during his independent practice time, he was challenged by unfamiliar words in his chapter book so he utilized a glossary to find definitions of the words. The incorporation of these key instructional strategies has provided multiple opportunities for students to access learning in different ways, with scaffolds and other instructional supports that allow them to construct meaning and deepen their thinking, as evidenced by the exemplary student work viewed in classrooms.
- The principal skillfully aligns resources to instructional goals and long-term plans and uses staff time strategically to maximize teacher capacity to deliver high quality instruction to all to students, across grades and disciplines. (1.3)
 - The principal articulated that resources are invested in providing supports to teachers, students, and administrative staff in order to ensure support for instructional goals and facilitate long-term plans for further development of the school. For example, due to the expanding middle school grades, resources have been set aside to hire an additional assistant principal, fund programs which teach students how to create codes for software programs, and purchase instructional materials. In partnership with the active Parents Association, which has provided resources to support the *Bridges* math program by purchasing consumables and manipulatives, the principal has helped to ensure a high level of fidelity in the implementation of this math program.

Investments have also been made to ensure funding for intervention services, professional development sessions and external consultants. Allocations for per session and per diem have also been scheduled to support horizontal and vertical planning that allows teachers to address instructional needs on the grade, outside of instructional time. In addition, there are allocations for materials for study groups focused on integrating reading and writing across content areas, reflecting the principal's belief that "informed and knowledgeable teachers effect change." Thus the principal's strategic budgetary and organizational decisions have resulted in increased pedagogical growth of teachers, as evident in teachers' observation reports showing their improved mastery in targeted domains of the Danielson Framework, and enhanced academic achievement by students, as evidenced by exemplary work products in portfolios.

- School leaders deliberately create teacher schedules that provide time for common planning, study groups and professional inquiry sessions. Weekly common preparation periods per grade are included in the master calendar, as well as coverages for teachers participating in vertical team meetings which are specifically focused on looking at curricula, student work and data, and their implications on teaching practices, so that all teachers make necessary instructional and organizational adjustments that accelerate learning from grade to grade. Students are grouped heterogeneously, with teachers' assigned based on licensure to ensure deep teacher and student mastery of content in all disciplines. Similarly, teachers are purposefully matched to teams that help build their capacity to deliver instruction that meets the diverse needs of all learners. This has resulted in teacher teams and assigned classroom teachers effectively supporting all students, allowing them to make progress towards learning goals, as measured by interim benchmark assessments and data showing students' progress on common assessments.
- The school supports the development of teachers by providing accurate feedback and next steps, using the Danielson Framework, thus ensuring that teachers grow professionally as they reflect on their practice daily. (4.1)
 - School leaders utilize regular cycles of formal and informal observations to get an accurate picture of teachers' strengths and areas of need, in order to provide appropriate next steps. Other formal and informal structures are also in place to support teachers sharing ideas, such as Drop-box to disseminate and adjust curriculum materials, classroom inter-visitation, and "Tuesday" workshops in which teachers present to their colleagues, resulting in the presenting teachers receiving feedback about their practice, outside of supervisory visits. New teachers are paired with experienced personnel, who are scheduled to co-teach with them in order to coach them during their regular instructional lessons. Administrators analyze observation reports in conjunction with student work and class data, in order to provide data driven feedback to support teacher growth. They also utilize additional observations to constantly monitor improvement of teacher practice, as measured by data on growth in student performance. This results in a strategic approach to providing accurate feedback that informs teachers' instructional plans, enabling them to be self-reflective and set goals that lead to improvement in their capacity and effectiveness in the classroom.

- Professional development expectations are based on the implementation of the CCLS and the Danielson Framework. Teachers have daily opportunities to review the Danielson rubric, with specific attention to the
 - critical attributes and possible example of goals, in order to come to a common understanding of what effective teaching looks and sounds like. Individualized next steps are based on teacher observation data which has been normed amongst school leaders and are linked to teachers' interests and needs, as reflected by their individual professional goals. Teachers' interests include deepening planning by utilizing Understanding by Design (UBD) structures and strengthening interdisciplinary instruction through infusion of the English language arts Common Core standards across content areas, so these topics are incorporated into next steps for teacher development. This approach ensures effective use of feedback that accurately reflects teachers' needs and goals, to provide personalized supports that accelerate teacher development across the school, as evidenced by observation data reviewed.
- A variety of teacher teams are involved in professional inquiry that strengthens teacher capacity to make adjustments to curricula, instructional practices and behavioral supports, resulting in improved student learning. (4.2)
 - All teachers participate in inquiry based professional collaborations that target strategies for improving instruction so that all students continue to achieve at high levels of proficiency across disciplines. School leaders participate in vertical team meetings as thought partners and to ensure team work is aligned to the school's instructional focus and goals, as well as to be able to report back to grade teams, thus supporting information dissemination school-wide. Teachers utilize similar protocols in all team meetings, asking reflective questions such as, "What are positives? What needs to be fixed?", and "What are next steps?" Building on this year's Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessment metrics, teachers discuss targeted students and growth measures and the impact on their instructional practices and curricula adjustments. For example, the observed writing inquiry team discussed how the inclusion of teaching points about conventions of writing elevated the quality of students writing and added that the samples of student work illustrated how effective the lessons were. For example, lessons on "apostrophes" and "capitalization" resulted in students' using them effectively in their next writing pieces. The team discussion also focused on instructional strategies and next steps that would be needed in future lessons, to continue to strengthen students' skills in writing conventions and mechanics from grade to grade, thus building teacher capacity in delivering instruction aligned to CCLS.
 - Teacher teams consistently use a wide array of data in order to accelerate student progress. The grade 7 team focused on a case study of a student experiencing behavioral difficulty in a core subject class. Teachers reviewed academic data in reading and math and each teacher discussed academic behaviors such as stamina, endurance and how well the student is able to perform, based on their observations. Teachers also observed the student in other classes in order to determine whether the issues stemmed from content or needed behavioral interventions. The teachers also reviewed behavioral trackers and homework assignment completion rates that were also being monitored. Teachers then devised

a plan that provided similar structures across all courses, in order to provide stability and familiarity for the student, as well as share practices that were successful. Another teacher team utilized student self-assessment checklists, on demand writing pieces and unit checklists, in order to determine whether students had mastered utilizing sight words

correctly and capitalizing proper nouns. One teacher stated, "It's important for us to understand which skills students are responsible for in each grade and ensure that our teaching leads to mastery of those skills." This approach allows teacher teams to develop individualized support systems for students, resulting in student growth, as well as the development of instructional practices that can be replicated across classrooms in order to support other students with similar needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to align assessment practices to curricula, to generate data that further supports instructional and pedagogical changes on the grade and individual student level, in order to maximize learning for all students. 2.2
 - A variety of assessments, including conferencing with students and administering grade specific exams, have allowed the school to unearth areas in which teachers need to focus. For example, grade 1 teachers implemented curricula adjustments to ensure that units included lessons on print conventions and mechanics, in response to findings from assessment data. Pre-tests in grades K-8 assess student strengths and identify what content and skills students need to successfully complete the unit. Students in kindergarten through grade 5 are assessed via the Fountas and Pinell system in order to track their fluency and comprehension, while middle school teachers rely on performance tasks, project based work, and pre and post testing to gain information on student progress. Rubrics are utilized from kindergarten through grade 8, outlining the expectations of performance as well as guiding children to self-assess regarding how well they are doing on assignments. However, a review of assessment data profiles showed a stronger focus on the analysis of performance at the class and grade level, rather than on specific needs of individual students, thus preventing a well-defined and clear picture of individual students' levels of mastery of targeted goals.
 - Teachers regularly monitor student work and data across classrooms to determine how well students are progressing. They use exit slips and written reflections from students' self-assessment, as well as interruptions during students' practice time, to engage in ongoing assessment of understanding and ascertain which students are in need of more time or additional supports, with the result that teachers adjust their lessons accordingly. Teachers also provide feedback to students on their written reflections. However, students' reflections are linked to broad categories of performance such as "high, medium" and "low", representing feedback that is not always optimal in deepening students' awareness of their next steps for mastery of learning goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Robert Fulton	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