



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Carter G. Woodson

PS 23

**545 Willoughby Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Celina Napolitano

Dates of review: November 19, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Ps 23 Carter G. Woodson is an elementary school with 277 students from Prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 61% Black, 38% Hispanic, and 1% White. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school embraces an inclusive culture of mutual respect and trust, ensuring a safe environment, where students and adults are valued, and structures support the social and emotional needs of all students. (1.4)
 - Classrooms and hallways are orderly, and students respect adults. The leadership greets students every morning and faculty is accessible to families during the day and at the dismissal time. The principal has an open door policy and students, parents and teachers say they always see her, make suggestions or sharing concerns. Furthermore, students have opportunities to participate and contribute to a positive school tone when they volunteer as lunch monitors and tutors, or when they make daily school announcements. Likewise, all students are involved in school-wide projects and community givebacks by participating in Toys for Tots, coat drives, or beautification of the neighborhood. Similarly, students join in the annual Penny Harvest and are encouraged to develop leadership roles at a round table about the distribution of funds, or when class representatives advise the dietician about school food. Moreover, all students participate in an anti-bullying program, create and sign The Power of One, oath with pledges and commitment to respect, as evidenced on a bulletin board on the main floor. As a result, the school provides an environment conducive to learning, where students, parents and teachers feel safe welcome and valued. Moreover, there is a low number of discipline related infractions as evidenced in the Online Occurrence Reporting System, thus decreasing class distractions caused by atypical behavior.
 - A full time guidance counselor works with identified students on developing positive attitude toward school via a chess club and peer mediation. The school nurse and assistant principal meet with a group of 7 students with asthma to support and mentor them as someone who perseveres in spite of the asthma challenge. A Physical Education teacher, in partnership with the nurse, initiated a walking club for the students to address obesity. The school also maintains an active collaboration with the Woodhull Hospital to support and educate the families of identified students about health concerns and solutions. Furthermore, the administration informs families about medical and social and emotional services available for the children in school, therefore coordinating mentoring programs for students with chronic absence due to asthma and those who live in temporary housing. As a result of these efforts, students and families have a positive attitude toward school and individual children's attendance has improved so far this year as evidenced in the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) report showing a significant increase of days present in 24 of the 33 identified students in grades 3-5 who had chronic absence last year.
- The principal makes organizational decisions to use resources in alignment with school goals that result in support for professional collaboration and progress toward student achievement. (1.3)

- The principal ensures that programs critical to student development and academic achievement, such as physical education and technology are continued despite budget cuts and personnel adjustments made in the beginning of the year. The administration, in collaboration with upper grade teachers, decided to keep content area departmentalization in grades 4 and 5, thus building on teacher content expertise with a consistent focus on meeting grade-level and school-wide academic goals aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Additionally, students in grades 3, 4, and 5 participate in hands-on activities and experiments in the Science lab. Students also say that they are better prepared for middle school because they are challenged to improve their grades and experience class and room change. Furthermore, the school has secured partnerships with the Mighty Milers and the Metropolitan Swimming Pool to enhance physical education, therefore driving positive change and a wellness culture for the school. Similarly, school leaders encourage the infusion of technology and students have access, in school and from home, to a website based educational program called Spatial-Temporal (ST) Math for MIND Research. Likewise, the administration and the teachers regularly schedule educational trips for students across grade levels. As a result, all students, including relevant subgroups have an opportunity to increase their learning by participation in extensions to their academic program, including wellness, science and technology.
- The administration, and teachers, restructured a school day to add time for common planning and academic interventions. The principal also strategically created teacher and student schedules for teacher teams to meet regularly and for the students to participate in extracurricular programs and academic interventions during the school day. Furthermore, special education teachers, as well as a science cluster teacher, have common planning time with grade level partners in horizontal and vertical teams focusing on the alignment to CCLS, analysis of assessment results, and looking at student work to ensure student engagement in challenging academic tasks. For example, a vertical upper grade team discusses individual student progress against the benchmarks of a unit in math and teachers offer each other feedback on instructional strategies for identified groups of learners. Similarly, a vertical lower grade teacher team engages regularly in planning of instructional units of study and discusses data from baseline performance tasks. Moreover, teachers use the common planning time to turn-key from professional development workshops and to share practices, especially in meeting the needs of groups of students. Consequently, teachers have multiple opportunities to actively engage in improvement of their instructional practices via collaborative analysis and review of student work in order to meet the school's goal of improving student performance.
- School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions to plan and align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards leading to rigorous academic tasks for all students. (1.1)
 - The leadership and teachers decided to continue the implementation of the McGraw Hill/Macmillan Wonders program in English language arts and Envisions Math in all grade levels. Furthermore, across the school teachers integrate units of study from the Go Math curriculum and the performance tasks from the Exemplars. In addition, six-week reading and writing maps include social studies, science, and math units ensuring

planning coherence and alignment with the CCLS. Teachers and school leaders also support approaches to the integration of instructional shift such as balancing informational text, word study and development of academic vocabulary across contents, and fluency in math. Moreover, science, and second language teachers align their units with the CCLS, including reading and understanding of informational text, real life connections and prior knowledge, as evidenced in their plans. Similarly, the writing curriculum and lessons emphasize research using multiple sources to form opinions and arguments. As a result, all students have opportunities to engage in learning academic skills that prepare them for college and careers.

- Teachers across grade levels plan rigorous daily and weekly tasks to promote high order skills. For example, grade 4 writing plans include tasks such as, writing an opinion essay on child labor and providing research based details and arguments. A Kindergarten math task requires the students to create a number book where each number 1-5 is written and represented with manipulatives or drawings. In addition, teachers plan essential questions like “What strategies help to solve multiplication facts?”, or “How and why did New York change over time?” Lesson plans and tasks also include asking and answering questions about the text, thus focusing student learning on improvement of comprehension and skills such as organizing, discussing and presenting information from various sources. For example, English language learners were asked to describe patterns of seasonal changes by using evidence from informational books and from real life experience. Consequently, all students across the grades, including English language learners and students with disabilities participate in rigorous, standards-based curricula and tasks.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance instructional practices across the school so that in all classrooms students are consistently engaged in higher order thinking through multiple entry points and appropriately challenging tasks and discussions. (1.2)
 - The school leaders have the expectation that teachers across grade levels group students to meet their learning needs and actively involve them in learning by asking high level questions and providing opportunities for discussions about tasks and problem solving. The principal states “it is work in progress”. Although classroom teachers we visited are attempting to implement strategies via the use of graphic organizers or guided questions, questioning in lessons is mostly low level and aimed at recalling or retelling. For example, in one class we heard a teacher ask “How will you check your work? How can you prove it?” While in another, classroom, questions were directed at recalling information about a story. Similarly, the school is embracing a school belief around student engagement in group discussions, and teachers in most classes are beginning to implement this practice as part of independent student work. However, lessons across the school are still predominantly teacher-centered, thus inconsistently attending to student learning styles and needs and limiting opportunities for students to discuss tasks and develop higher- order thinking. While some flexible groups and partnerships were evident, the embedded extensions and supports for student learning were inconsistently implemented, thus limiting student opportunities to engage in debates and dialogues about

tasks. Consequently, uneven application of higher-order questioning hinders student access to rigorous tasks and minimizes student opportunities to extend their learning and discussions.

- Increase consistency in the use of checks for understanding and data from common assessments to determine student progress and inform instructional adjustments to meet student needs. (2.2)
 - The school collects data from standardized and periodic assessments. Teachers also assess students with running records in reading and performance tasks embedded in units of study, and keep individual student data in class data binders. Furthermore, teachers across grade levels use standards based rubrics to assess student writing and outline next steps; they are also working on introducing them as self-assessment. Teacher teams are beginning to use student work and results of performance tasks to analyze student growth and to identify skills and areas for academic improvement towards goals. Although grade level teachers analyze the results of formative and summative assessments and make effort to measure student growth, there was little evidence that they make timely adjustments to their instruction, thus limiting teachers' ability to address and meet student needs. Similarly, there was limited evidence that teachers check for student understanding throughout the lessons. As a result of these inconsistencies, identification of needs of relevant subgroups, including English language learners and high achievers, is minimized, thus limiting opportunities for targeted support to advance learning for all students.
- Ensure the system of teacher observations and feedback includes analysis of learning outcomes and provides support with next steps for continuous teacher development and pedagogical growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders developed a calendar of observations for the year and have already conducted the first round of classroom visits. All teachers received a copy of the Danielson Framework that was discussed during professional development sessions provided for all by the support network and a talent coach. Furthermore, teachers receive immediate instructional feedback from the school leaders during regular classroom walkthroughs. The principal identifies the questioning and discussion component of Domain 3 of the framework as the area for professional growth across the school and the focus of instructional feedback. However, a review of observation forms indicates that feedback to teachers regarding questioning and discussion techniques and engaging students in learning is not fully aligned to the common framework and inconsistently provide clear next steps and expectations that target the chosen focus components. For example, teachers receive comments and feedback outlining the flow of the lesson and specific recommendations. The school is developing a system to use analysis of student work to enhance instructional feedback. Similarly, teachers are beginning to set professional goals using the components of the framework as self-reflection and discussions about instructional practices. Consequently, the school's ability to improve practice is limited and acceleration of student learning hindered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Carter G. Woodson	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