



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Samuel Mills Sprole School

Elementary School K032

**317 Hoyt Street
Brooklyn
NY 11231**

Principal: Deborah Florio

Dates of review: January 29 - 30, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Samuel Mills Sprole School is an elementary school with 427 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 23% Black, 29% Hispanic, 38% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school leader, reflecting on school data, has revised and augmented the school's curriculum, ensuring that all instruction is aligned to Common Core expectations, and students are consistently challenged and engaged. (1.1)
 - Reflecting on the decline in achievement on the 2013 State assessments that indicated a lack of success with a change to a more structured literacy program last year, the school leader and faculty returned to using Teachers College units of study to deepen alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and provide students with a more rigorous approach to reading and writing. These units were then aligned to the expectations of the Danielson Framework, with deeper questioning in the form of key questions and adjusted by grade teams with suggested scaffolding options to ensure that the needs of students were consistently met. This depth of analysis and adjustment was also seen in math, where the newly implemented CCLS-aligned core curriculum has already significantly increased the level of challenge afforded students in problem solving. As a result of these reflective decisions, students have already shown a marked improvement in achievement on math unit assessments and rubric-assessed writing, demonstrating skills such as text referencing and persistence, preparing them well with college and career readiness skills as they advance academically.
 - Working to ensure that the needs of all students are met while maintaining the rigor of classroom instruction, administrators and faculty examine student work weekly at teacher team meetings and as part of developing teacher feedback from observations, and adjust instruction accordingly. For example, when early samples of student work from the non-fiction unit of study indicated that students were really struggling with complex texts, the timeframe for the unit and mini-lessons were adjusted to provide greater exposure to text features such as captions. National Geographic student magazines were also incorporated into the unit to enrich non-fiction reading in a real world setting that carried over into the school's social studies interdisciplinary units. This is especially important as most classes follow the Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) model. This increased rigor for all students was clearly evidenced in a fourth grade class as special needs students were supported by checklists and mnemonic reminders as they attacked a class task. Consequently, all students have developed the skills to work with non-fiction as evidenced by the museum projects developed by students around non-fiction interdisciplinary studies.
- Classroom instruction is grounded in small group supports that utilize a range of physical, emotional and academic scaffolds, enabling all students to enter into rigorous learning experiences from multiple access points. (1.2)
 - The school's commitment to the workshop model and guided practice is uniformly present in all specialty classrooms and all content areas. Teacher teams meet weekly, assessing student work to align student groups to student needs. This small group focus is enhanced by the work

of at least two teachers in each classroom at this virtually all ICT school that serves students with a range of needs including Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other learning and physical disabilities. Utilizing push-in support staff, as well as reviewing the range of protocols to determine those best suited for a co-teaching model, the principal has ensured that small groups are consistently supported with scaffolded instruction that enables all students to engage in curricula that is CCLS aligned, rigorous and challenging. For example in one kindergarten class a blind student was provided with a special floor seat with a back that enabled him to participate in a class discussion on the rug with the rest of the students. ASD students are also provided with a sensory gym that enable them to “take a break” if needed so that they can address learning in the same class as their general education peers. English language learners are supported with extensive visuals to increase comprehension. These scaffolds were also seen when one teacher in a first grade class took a group of students through a non-fiction book using the picture walk strategy to develop understanding of content prior to reading, while another teacher worked with a group of chapter book readers on developing vocabulary through the use of context clues. This level of individualization for every child has resulted in increased academic growth in oral and written language. This growth was further demonstrated by student discussion in a kindergarten dual language class as students worked in small groups supporting each other in both languages and in dated samples of student writing in portfolios across grades.

- The principal strategically prioritizes resources to maintain a low student-teacher ratio, resulting in highly individualized instruction and social-emotional support for all learners, as seen in meaningful work. (1.3)
 - Committed to achieving the school’s targeted and long term goals of improved student growth for students in the lowest third and continuously enhanced teacher practice, the principal sees staffing and intensified professional development as her top budgetary priorities. She uses resources to ensure that there are two teachers in every class, including the few non-ICT classes. In the gifted class, a paraprofessional is provided in lieu of a second teacher to ensure that students can be supported during small group instruction. In addition, two extra teachers serve as a resource for classes with autistic students, one at the upper level and one at the lower level. Service providers also push-in to classrooms, further ensuring that the teacher to student ratio is extremely low. Professional development to support adult growth is provided through work with respected educational leaders such as Tony Stead, as well training from Teachers College and the Network, extending instructional practices. As a result, strong instruction is well aligned to data-defined and focused goals. This ensures that students are engaged in meaningful work with teacher support at all times.
 - Hiring practices and teacher assignments at the school reflect a clear understanding of student needs and data-defined goals. A hiring committee consisting of the principal, grade teachers, the union chapter chair, the instructional lead teacher and the assistant principal conduct a building walkthrough with the candidate, hold an interview with prepared questions, view a model lesson and review the candidate’s portfolio. Teacher assignments are based on knowing teachers well, aligning their

personalities with that of their co-teachers, and best utilizing their skills, ascertained from observations, to the needs of the school. Effective teachers are placed where they can best address student academic and social emotional needs. For example, the newly hired dual language teacher, extremely fluent in both languages, is also a skilled early childhood pedagogue who provides highly motivating learning experiences for her English language learners. Further, though all teachers support students through academic intervention sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the ASD Nest support teachers and the school social workers are specifically assigned to work with special needs students, as they use targeted strategies to engage struggling students. Consequently, academic intervention provides highly granular support for lowest third students, closing the achievement gap.

- The school's culture reflects its commitment to equity of opportunity, ensuring that all students have access to extracurricular activities and school learning experiences, and are welcomed and nurtured whatever their needs. (1.4)
 - "Inclusive, nurturing and respectful" are words used by parents to describe the culture of the school, yet these do not sufficiently describe the caring nature of all staff at the school. Though the school is largely composed of inclusive classes, there is no difference in the way students are treated or expected to act. This is well aligned to the school's theory of action and goal of success for all learners, especially lowest third students, as it supports all students as individuals. Using the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) protocol, the school has provided intensive teacher training, embedding an expectation of respect, tolerance and responsibility in all aspects of the school day, and enabling teachers to imbue students with the personal behaviors needed for academic success. Classrooms have a "take a break" area so that students can self-regulate their behavior. Students comment that, "This is a safe school. Teachers are out everywhere, even recess, to talk about what's happening and solve problems." The principal shares clear expectations with parents and students at a yearly kick-off event and class banners line the halls, reflecting student pride. The school community actively provides opportunities for all voices, including those of students, to be heard. For example, at the request of a parent committee, the cafeteria menus were changed and a salad bar was introduced. Student voice is evident in student-defined projects such as support for Hurricane Sandy victims and other charitable events, expanding parent engagement, as well. "Family Fun Nights" occur monthly with weekly reminders sent by the communications committee. Cognizant of the need for students in its nearby housing project to have greater access to books and support for reading, the school, in conjunction with the Parents Association, is currently installing a library annex in the project's community room and providing volunteer librarians. Hence, parent engagement has increased significantly and parents praise "the collaborative culture." Because the milieu is so conducive to learning, students focus on academics and are celebrated for effort and growth on bulletin boards that honor attendance, and writing achievement. As one newly successful student stated, "I finally feel like people care."

- The school leader astutely develops individualized goals with each teacher and consistently provides targeted professional development, ensuring that capacity building is deeply embedded in every instructional day. (4.1)
 - The school uses the Danielson Framework in a collaborative and highly effective manner. Prior to meeting with the principal, teachers complete a self-reflection and define their personal goals. These are then revised with the principal, based on needs identified in observations and analysis of student work. Goals for the year are clearly defined and professional development supports put in place to ensure teacher growth. Progress towards goals is then reviewed four times a year through check in conversations that include reflections on student progress. In addition, the both administrators provide teachers with focused feedback that works to take even strong teachers to ever higher levels. For example, feedback for one effective teacher indicated that next steps included working to increase student ownership of discussion and independence as a means of becoming highly effective. Teachers College video trainings are routinely used to support identified teachers in targeted areas of balanced literacy development, and well respected literacy consultants enhance the teaching of writing through the use of in-house lab site classrooms and peer model lessons based on teacher needs. Professional study groups focus on close reading of complex text and growth in questioning skills, further enabling teachers to work together and providing additional peer support for pedagogic growth. Moreover, out of classroom personnel, including art, technology and physical education teachers and the school librarian, under the guidance of a principal intern, work as a group to develop interdisciplinary lessons that address student needs in comprehension and reading. Lead teachers in all content areas serve as experts who mentor and turnkey trainings, thus enhancing distributive leadership and providing teachers with opportunities for greater growth, as well as improving instruction and engagement school-wide. Consequently, teachers see the Framework as a learning tool and classroom practice is enhanced by improved pedagogy, raising levels of student achievement, as demonstrated by improved writing skills on rubric based assessments and tracked movement on the Teachers College Writing Continuum.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the consistency of teacher feedback, so that all learners have a clear understanding of next steps and take ownership of their progress. (2.2)
 - The school uses a wide range of formative and summative student data to identify student needs and define next steps. Teachers College running records assess student reading levels, task-aligned rubrics are used to evaluate units of study, and Foundations assessments provide data on reading skills in early childhood classes. In addition, in-depth analysis of “Go Math!” unit tests helps to define grade level and school level trends. The data from these assessments, coupled with daily teacher reflections from in class observations and ongoing checks for understanding, such as exit slips, homework review and in class questioning, is used to identify small groups for targeted support as well as enrichment for students in need of greater challenge. However, in a very small number of classrooms, feedback to students is not provided

through rubric annotation with authentic comments. While most teachers delve deeply into the rubric with students, providing them with clearly defined next steps to better achievement, these few others simply grade the work using the rubric and give students a number grade. This limits students' ability to understand what skills they need to improve, hindering student growth.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Samuel Mills Sprole School	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