

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**The Pacific School**

**Elementary School K038**

**450 Pacific  
Brooklyn  
NY 11217**

**Principal: Yolanda Ramirez**

**Dates of review: March 18-19, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Pacific School is an elementary school with 497 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 37% Black, 36% Hispanic, 13% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 21% 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 90.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Strategically selected Core Curriculum options, augmented by strong practices embedded in instruction, create a targeted curriculum that meets student needs and aligns to the Common Core Learning Standards. (1.1)
  - The school has developed a rich, engaging curriculum by implementing materials from the citywide core curriculum, and integrating strong practices from other sources. For example, in English language arts, all grades use Ready Gen. However, strong questioning techniques are still maintained and utilized in the Junior Great Books program and are artfully blended into Ready Gen program, as well. Planning documents show that students are expected to engage in peer led book discussions that are teacher facilitated rather than teacher directed, and to routinely challenge each other, using text evidence to support arguments and pose additional queries. In addition, guided reading, a strategy melded into instruction from balanced literacy, is seen in early childhood lesson plans to support the individualized acquisition of decoding and fluency. This same reflective balance of materials and programs is seen in math curricula where the use of Go Math is augmented with Response to Intervention (RtI) strategies, ensuring that all students have access to the complex materials. Further, writing, a school wide focus is seen in unit plans across all content areas, consistently requiring students to explain their thinking and provide support for assertions and arguments. As a result, a coherent curriculum, well aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts is seen in across grades and subject areas, preparing students with the academic skills needed for college and career readiness.
- The purposeful organizational decisions of the school leader prioritize the utilization of all resources, including strategic placement of staff and use of technology to consistently focus on data defined school-wide goals. (1.3)
  - The thoughtful decisions made by the school leader as a result of discussion with staff, parents and students as well as the ongoing analysis of data have consistently targeted the use of resources to addressing school-wide goals in alignment with student needs. Despite a tight budget, the principal has prioritized the purchase of additional non-fiction materials and teacher texts for study groups that are directly connected to the goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). Seeking to continuously support student growth and enhance learning opportunities, the school has begun a Spanish immersion program in Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten. Further, in order to deepen the level of student discussion school-wide and enhance the implementation of the Ready Gen literacy program, the principal has maintained and expanded the consultancy with Junior Great Books. In addition, she has maintained data driven academic intervention through “Power Saturday” sessions for struggling learners, ensuring that teachers support all level 1 and 2 students during these sessions. Technology is also a prioritized at the school. The purchase of a group of IPADs for every class on every grade has expanded upon the use of Smart boards. Consequently, classroom

instruction is more deeply aligned to Common Core expectations, and rubric based writing assessments indicate that students in all classes are making progress towards data defined goals.

- School schedules, hiring practices, and teacher assignments reflect robust efforts to close the achievement gap through teacher collaboration and strategic intervention. Extended day classes support students in need four days a week, as do “Power Saturdays.” Rather than maintain very low registers in kindergarten, the principal chose to collapse a class and use the highly skilled teacher as a response to Intervention provider who worked exclusively with students in small groups, providing Tier II interventions based on assessed student needs. Additional support is also provided by scheduling which guarantees that two teachers are in every class to work with struggling readers during literacy. In order to ensure consistent collaboration, teachers have two common preps each week, over and above weekly inquiry team grade meetings. Teacher placement has also been focused on student growth. Teachers with needed skills have been moved to classes where they can have the most impact. For example a strong Pre-kindergarten teacher was moved to kindergarten where her skill in teaching literacy could best support emergent readers. This thoughtful alignment of resources to needs has resulted in improved student growth as evidenced by a Progress Report indicating student progress moved from a C to a B despite the increased difficulty of the Common Core assessments.
- A culture of learning continuously communicates high expectations to the school community and supports all students in developing academic and social-emotional skills needed for college and career readiness. (3.4)
  - Implementing the Danielson Framework through a thoughtful and scaffolded three year roll-out, which featured a monthly focus on a specific domain, the school has communicated high expectations for instructional practice. These expectations were supported by ongoing professional development in the framework that included model classroom walkthroughs used to calibrate and norm ratings. Further, work during teacher teams routinely reflects on Danielson expectations and aligns instruction accordingly. Intervisitations and informal teacher to teacher outreach are also indicative of teacher growth and collaboration around the high expectations of the Framework. Accountability was established through teacher observations and the review of student work from the lessons, including an evaluation of homework, to ensure alignment to the lesson and the rigors of the Common Core. Therefore, teachers have a well-defined understanding of the Danielson Framework and clear expectations are embedded in the school’s culture, enhancing student work products and discussion school-wide.
  - Building a foundation for college and career readiness is prioritized by parents, students, staff and the administration, and is a process that instills skills and implants an understanding of need for these skills. Students are initially exposed to college through “Spirit Day” festivities when all teachers wear their college shirts, and through college banners that are posted on bulletin boards throughout the school. Maps with college locations and “virtual” college tours further expose students to college as part of their academic career. Principal breakfasts consistently focus on the importance of college and skills such as persistence and

organizational skills needed to succeed at all levels. Parent workshops begin the articulation process in fourth grade when the guidance counselor and the parent coordinator define the options for students and the process in this middle school choice district. Discussion is individualized by student at the fifth grade level as parents meet to discuss how to select an appropriate middle school for their child and what to do if students do not get their ranked choices. As a result, all students see college as a part of their future and are aware of the skills needed to succeed at the college level, as was evidenced in student meetings and small group discussion.

- Strong, highly collaborative teacher teams routinely use an inquiry approach and established protocols to reflect on student work, and focus on improved teacher practice and instructional coherence. (4.2)
  - All teachers serve as members of grade teams and the vast majority serve as members of specialty vertical teams as well. Recognizing the importance of data usage in identifying school trends and individual student goals, the principal has provided per session funding to enable teachers to analyze data after school. Two common prep periods a week further enhance the opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively in their teams. These team meetings are also augmented by faculty conference professional development sessions. As evidenced by the observed team meetings, teachers routinely examine student work using a consistent protocol and share strategies to address identified student needs. For example, in order to provide greater support to the school's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) students, teachers on the fifth grade team developed a process that used a range of questions to provide students with multiple levels of access to complex texts in alignment with Common Core expectations. In addition, targeted social-emotional supports were shared in a team meeting and then turn-keyed vertically by the teacher from a self-contained class, enabling all teachers to enhance supports both academically and socially for IEP students as well as non-IEP strugglers. Consequently, there is a coherence of instructional focus school-wide and struggling students have shown significant progress in understanding complex text and academic language.

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

- Deepen instructional practices across all classrooms to ensure that all students are evenly challenged to take part in high order thinking and rich discussion. (1.2)
  - Teaching practices are consistently aligned to the school's selected citywide core curricula as well as the school's beliefs as to how students learn best. Classrooms are print rich and utilize book clubs and read alouds as part of English language arts instruction. Word walls and "Flow of the Day" charts are seen in every classroom as is a range of student work. Students are consistently engaged and actively participate in a range of differentiated activities, school-wide. Student work was highly evident in all classes and indicated extensive writing throughout the curriculum, coupled with authentic teacher comments and the regular use of rubrics. Further, student led discussion, a clear expectation of the

Common Core, the instructional shifts and the highest levels of the Danielson Framework, is a priority at the school and is well evidenced during Junior Great Books discussions, and in content discussion in many classrooms. However, the depth of questions posed to initiate discussion and “turn and talks” is not consistently rigorous. For example, in one second grade class, the teacher asked the students to discuss “What is the solution in both stories?” during a turn and talk comparing two stories, while in another fourth grade class, students were asked to “Turn and talk to your partner about your feelings.” Consequently, student discussion, though evident in all classes, does not yet uniformly result in higher order levels of thinking, limiting student capacity to develop strong analytic skills and hindering student growth.

- Enhance the assessment practices during instruction so that teachers consistently adjust scaffolds and supports in a timely manner. (2.2)
  - A variety of common assessments well aligned to the school’s chosen curricula, including running records, performance assessments, unit assessments in content areas, rubric assessed writing and grade level assessments in English language arts and math, provide teachers and the school with data to analyze and identify trends and student needs at frequent intervals throughout the year. This data provides actionable feedback to teachers and students and measures student and school progress towards defined goals. For example, reflecting on the item skills analysis of math unit assessments, the principal was able to identify student needs in the area of numeracy and number sense. Feedback was then provided to early childhood and special needs teachers which led them to enhance the use of manipulatives to help address this data defined need. Upper grade student work, consistently displayed in all classrooms often contains post- its or rubrics with authentic teacher comments, while teachers in the early childhood provide feedback during teacher conferences to support student next steps. Peer conferences also enable students to self and peer assess so that they can deepen their capacity to grow as learners, as evidenced by the use of student comment post it’s in upper grade classrooms. Nevertheless, though teachers routinely circulate during small group instruction and meet with students during conferences, taking notes as they define student progress towards goals and identify needs, teacher checks for understanding though seen in most classrooms, do not always result in immediate changes to scaffolded supports, slowing the pace of student conceptual understanding and achievement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Pacific School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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				
<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 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			
<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 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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>