

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Lewis H. Latimer

K056

**170 Gates Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11238**

Principal: Deborah Clark-Johnson

Dates of review: December 9-10, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Lewis H. Latimer is an elementary school with 238 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 84% Black, 12% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers' practices are aligned to the school's belief system for student learning that fosters student engagement and rigorous thinking as evident in student work products for all learners. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students "Learn by Doing". Students must be actively engaged in units of study and tasks taking the lead in their own learning with appropriate guidance from teachers. Teachers continue their work utilizing Understanding by Design (UBD) aligned to domain one of the Danielson Framework focusing on highly effective practices regarding lesson planning which positively impacts on classroom practices. Furthermore, across classrooms, teachers were knowledgeable of subject matter and learning outcomes were clear to students. Students were able to represent their learning in multiple ways and teachers facilitated group discussions. In a math class, students worked on creating multiple visual pictorials of multiplication groupings based on a word problem. This results in school-wide instructional practices that are aligned to the more demanding instructional shifts such as deep understanding of core mathematical concepts that meet the needs of all students.
 - In most classrooms, teachers utilized a wide variety of teaching strategies in order to support student learning. Students described opportunities of working in small groups on large projects that are monitored by the teacher. In a pre-kindergarten classroom, students had the opportunity to exercise choice to determine the area of interest where they would spend their work time. The teacher monitored the room and student work posing questions in order to further their discussions. Students in the writing area were asked to pick a stencil related to their winter theme. Once selected, students answered questions about why they made the selection, its attributes, its beginning letter and sound. The paraprofessional worked with individual students who had difficulty with fine motors skills and found the tracing difficult. In a grade 4 classroom, students were reviewing math assessments and were required to discuss with pre-assigned ability-based partners their process thinking of tasks they found difficult. Students were asked, "What strategy did you use; what are you finding difficult; and why?" The teacher circulated among students providing additional questions and discussions stems such as "tell me more" for groups that had difficulty with sustaining conversation. These strategies have resulted in ensuring that all students have the opportunity to participate and interact with cognitively demanding tasks and thus demonstrate higher-order thinking evident in their student work.
- School- wide grading policies and assessment practices provide feedback to students and teachers on student progress leading to instructional adjustments that meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
 - Teachers use pre-and post-assessments, end of unit tests, and periodic assessments aligned to the school's instructional goals. Recent English language arts (ELA) assessments have revealed students are performing

well capturing information when reading informational text and are capable discussing their work. Students continue to struggle with writing that explains their thought processes and short responses to text. School leaders provide teachers with feedback on the progress of their class after school-wide assessments are completed and engage teachers in conversations about the strengths and next steps in classroom instruction. Teachers provide students with feedback on work that is part of their portfolios and work folders based on rubrics and also conduct student conferences to discuss next steps in order to refine their work. Parents receive report cards three times per year and students are asked to provide samples of work to discuss with teacher and parent during parent-teacher conferences. The school has modified the report card to reflect a grading policy that supports the more rigorous curricula and instructional shifts per grade. This structure allows teachers, families, and students to receive accurate information on how well students are doing and what next steps need to be taken in order to accelerate student learning.

- Most teachers have a process in which they check for understanding throughout instruction. In observed classrooms, students had copies of rubrics to self-assess their work and determine the necessary next steps to increase the quality of their work. Teachers monitored student discussions, recorded information, and supported individuals or groups when necessary. In one class, the teacher interrupted the practice session in order to clarify misunderstandings that were prevalent in several groups. Other students were able to respond, clearing up misconceptions, and returned to work. Also, students use non-verbal cues and accountable talk stems to illustrate agreement /disagreement and understanding resulting in classroom environments providing multiple opportunities for teachers to gain insight into how students are processing information enabling appropriate adjustments to be made throughout lesson delivery. As a result, all learners show progress in their portfolio work.
- The principal makes deliberate decisions regarding resources, teacher assignments and hiring of new staff to support instructional goals and student needs resulting in improved student work. (1.3)
 - The school's instructional focus is to ensure fidelity to the implementation of the Danielson Framework, the new instructional materials in English language arts and math, and the integration of the CCLS. The principal utilizes accrued funding in order to provide professional development from external vendors and purchase content-specific school coaches to support the school's instructional focus and Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals. Per-diem and per-session funds for teachers to take part in training outside of the school are scheduled including registration fees and material costs. Teachers are participating in professional opportunities on norming of rubrics, curricula planning, questioning, and deepening their content knowledge. Furthermore, the principal participates in "staff sharing" with the other campus schools resulting in cost-sharing to provide student enrichment programming in art, physical education, and science. These purposeful decisions to support teachers and students allow all students to participate in broader curricula which results in an increase in the quality of student work.

- Hiring decisions are based on school need. The recently hired social worker exhibited strengths working with students and families to promote academic and social behaviors leading to academic progress in a supportive and nurturing way. The principal students and families needed additional supports as the curricula became more demanding. Teacher assignments are based on grade/class data and preference and licensure. Student needs and staff strengths are matched in order to provide small-group and extended-time instruction. For example, extended-time groups are based on common grade assessments and students with specific skill deficits are matched with highly skill teachers in that area. Flexible grouping results when students are regrouped after each assessment for more precise support. Service providers for English language learners (ELL) and special education students work closely with teachers in the classroom to reduce interruptions to the instructional day and to provide continuity for students in their classrooms. This approach allows the school to meet the needs of all students as they experience more demanding work with the student-centered supports in place so they are career and college ready.
- The principal and lead teachers support teachers using the Danielson Framework to raise the level of school-wide instructional practices leading to professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
 - There are various needs of the teaching staff. Support is provided to strengthen content knowledge aligned to suitable instructional practices. The principal engages teachers in one-to-one conversations in order to develop individual professional development plans for the year. Teachers also have the opportunity to participate in professional book clubs in order to further their knowledge in predetermined areas. Classroom observations based on the Danielson framework and the quality of student work, are followed by reflective feedback cycles within a week that include next steps such as intervisitation, professional readings, coaching, and mentoring. The principal schedules additional classroom visits to monitor development and adjusts schoolwide professional development based on an analysis of conducted observations. This structure enables the principal to have frequent opportunities to observe classroom instruction and to provide next steps to raise the level of instructional practices across the school.
 - Teachers are provided multiple opportunities to view videos in order to strengthen their mutual understanding of the Danielson Framework and its impact on how teacher effectiveness is measured. Staff discussions center on identifying effective practices and next steps. Teachers receive feedback on indicators within domains focused on classroom environment and instruction which are aligned to the school's instructional focus of using questioning and discussion techniques and establishing a culture for learning. Feedback from viewed observation reports focus on lesson planning/development in order to strengthen lesson delivery to acknowledgment of high levels of student participation and next steps surrounding the quality of questions and discussion techniques to further student learning. Furthermore, the principal encourages formal and informal conversations about teacher practice and high expectations. These consistent efforts to provide support promote professional growth and reflection via a highly supportive evaluation system.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the curricula is Common Core aligned in all content areas and includes higher order thinking skills emphasized in academic tasks that promote college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school has selected new curricula materials in English language arts and mathematics in order to support the instructional shifts in these content areas. The principal has focused on ensuring the implementation of these materials at a high level. There is continued work supporting science and social studies in order to create more rigorous tasks and units of study based on State scope and sequence. However, there is limited identification of college and career readiness skills such as students having mastery of all grade level standards with fluency and independence, and writing clear sentences and paragraphs on a range of topics read and discussed by students. This hampers the opportunities for all subject area curricula to remain cognitively demanding and rigorous for all learners.
 - To school utilizes the resources of Think Central, Essentials of Good Instruction, and EngageNY and teacher teams in order to determine the higher order thinking skills necessary to complete tasks. Teachers utilize suggested activities in order to support targeted student groups providing additional strategies and supports. Typical experiences such as class trips have evolved into conducting interviews with personnel, personal essays, and shared text readings enabling all learners to participate in the experience. However, identified skills or academic behaviors leading to rigorous habits from grade to grade are inconsistent in all subject areas. As a result, students do not demonstrate rigorous thinking across all subjects.
- Expand inquiry team work that focuses on student progress and build teachers' leadership capacity in order to increase their ability to make strategic decisions impacting students' learning school wide. (4.2)
 - All teachers are involved in professional collaborations. Teams are divided into primary and upper elementary grades as well as a team focused on students with disabilities. Teams are supported by coaches and minutes, agendas, and next steps are submitted to the principal for follow-up. Coaches also assist in monitoring goal attainment as evidenced in teacher plans, developed units of study and performance tasks during team meetings. However, limited discussions occurred regarding coherence from grade to grade based on student work thus hampering the school's ability to have a school-wide plan to accelerate student achievement.
 - Teachers use assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses of students and their implications on instructional practices and adjustments to curricula. For example, the upper elementary team received the items analysis data from State assessments and targeted the skills for which students had difficulty. Those skills were incorporated in units of study and performance tasks. However, few discussions have taken place to discuss student progress regarding the skills and standards that must be

mastered in the current grade. This reduces the school's ability to utilize data in a more strategic and targeted way for student subgroups to achieve mastery or goal attainment.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Lewis H. Latimer	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