

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

75K077

**62 Park Place
Brooklyn
NY 11217**

Principal: Merryl Redner-Cohen

Dates of review: February 24-26, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.077K is an elementary-high school with 288 students from K through grade 12+. The school population comprises 49% Black, 23% Hispanic, 20% White, 7% Asian, and 1% unspecified students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 83% of the students enrolled and girls account for 17%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 88.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School wide curricular aligns the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts with targeted planning to provide a range of learning experiences meeting the needs of its diverse learners. (1.1)
 - The school has a curriculum designed to live its school motto “Jobs at 5” and focuses on developing the whole child as a way to develop academic and social skills. Since the introduction of the CCLS, the school has targeted what informational text means to their program as well as working to build a better understanding of how their students can show problem solving skills and engage in social learning activities. The school uses the Equals curriculum for mathematic and the Unique Learning curriculum, aligned to the CCLS, as a coherent starting point across all sites. There is a targeted focus on Speaking and Listening because fifty-one percent of the students are non-verbal. Sound in Motion (SIM) curriculum, a kinesthetic interactive English language arts program is also used and co-taught by classroom and speech teachers. During a collaborative team meeting, teachers stated “this focus has resulted in increased quality of student discussion”, using assistive technology as needed. Teacher teams supplement the curricula with units of study to closely align to a focus of service to the school, their community and address college and career readiness skills. Throughout all classrooms visited, emphasis was noted in making content relevant to real life situations, such as filling out job applications as well as knowing what appropriate dressing for work is. In addition, a targeted group of middle school inclusion students with reading levels up to 4 grades below and comprehension levels 1-2 grades below, are using the Wilson reading program. As a result of this, the average Pre to Post-test increase is 44% and 49% consecutively.
 - Teachers are in their third year of planning/refining units study aligned to the CCLS and differentiated to support all student populations. Teachers ensure that all learners are able to access curriculum through thoughtful collaborative grade-band planning based on a thorough review of student work and data. All students are assessed using Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) and their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is aligned to support the instructional process. Lesson plans include student groupings according to proficiency with differentiated tasks and texts. Student portfolio reviews, teacher team meeting agendas and sharing via Dropbox provide opportunities for teachers to reflect and refine practices. SANDI data helps target skills for units of study across grades and content areas. The school sees progress through the review of portfolio artifacts and student work in teacher team meetings. As a result to date, 17 (5.9%) students have transitioned to a less restrictive settings and 34 (11.8%) students have reduced their related service mandates. In addition, minimally verbal and non-verbal students are making active progress toward increasing their expressive and/or receptive language skills. In the 2013-14 school year, 51.1% of students are designated as minimally verbal or non-verbal. From

October-December, 54% of those students achieved their first quarterly objective.

- School leaders make strategic decisions with an emphasis on program scheduling, technology and professional development that support instructional initiatives and maximize student progress. (1.3)
 - All resources are used to support the school's instructional goals to increase student learning and prepare them for independence outside of the school environment. Per-session funds were used to create a Common Core team designed to develop tools to support the school's three major initiatives towards these goals; instruction of writing for all learners, promoting student involvement in the goal setting process and sharing effective student practice through technology. The school invested in SMARTboards and iPads for all classrooms to support the development of student learning through research and interactive engagement in language and reading skills across all subject areas. The school assessed their existing academic programs to determine which ones could successfully convert to a SMARTboard or tablet platform in order to allow teachers to expand the use of tools they were accustomed to, while learning how to engage students in cognitive learning with the new technology. In addition, iPads were introduced to foster independent student-to-student interaction and communication. Consequently, the focus on the interaction amongst the 6:1:1 middle school students with autism and their general education peers, it was noted that the 6:1:1 students with autism are demonstrating improvement in their social skills and their ability to be expressive about those social experiences. For example, during a class visit students were observed listening to each other as they shared ideas and worked together in a science lesson demonstrating the concept of "sink" versus "float". As a result of this emphasis on developing appropriate social skills, students now have the ability to be expressive about their social experiences. Presently, 75% of 6:1:1 students achieved their short term objectives; independently produce a five part narrative to recount an event and 85% are able to independently dictate or write an original event. Students' work portfolios show continual improvement towards reaching their individual goals and support the school instructional initiatives.
 - Deliberate, planned scheduling decisions ensure that teacher teams meet twice a week formally and 2-3 times informally during their common planning time. According to one of the teacher teams, "this has helped us to nurture our conversations around strengthening our teaching repertoire", thus engaging students in challenging academic tasks. The teams are structured by grade bands providing for a focused vision supporting the school's instructional goals to increase student progress. The teams created three user guides to support teachers; Guide 1 for assessment practices (SANDI), Guide 2 for planning instruction (including a skills progression map) and Guide 3 for post-assessment. The guides provide concrete examples and resources for teachers. This has resulted in consistency in pedagogical practices, as evidenced across classes. In addition, teachers stated their student data and work samples indicated a need to target student writing. The school's investment in the Unique Learning Curriculum provides support with a targeted writing focus. In addition, the principal has structured time so that teachers can engage in inter-visitations in the areas of the use of technology for struggling

readers and writers. The school's has supported the Student Blog(s) as a means to further develop students' writing skills. The "blog" is an online community that is student produced and includes interviews of staff and students and highlights of the school. The impact of the use of technology is evidenced in Reading and Communication Development scores as well as students' Independent Proficiency for English Language Learners (based on SANDI) has an average increase of 59%.

- The school uses assessments and rubrics aligned to its curricula, to analyze student progress and ongoing comprehension checks that enables teachers to make instructional decisions and provide specific feedback. (2.2)
 - Across the school, administrators, teachers and related service providers collect and use a range of assessments such as Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) and New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA). Teacher teams examine SANDI data (used as a baseline assessment) to target high frequency skills and to strategically adjust instructional plans to support curricula plans and targeted student needs. For example, students were asked to find the main idea and supporting details from a group of books about different kinds of snakes. The feedback from the teacher to one of the students was to transfer his ideas from the graphic organizer into full sentences. In another middle school class, a student was struggling with adding and subtracting fractions when denominators were not the same. "Let's keep working on this! You remembered to add your numerators, but can we add the denominators that are not the same?" To help reteach this concept, the teachers assigned additional Acuity Tutorials and Brainpop. Lessons are presented with explicitly stated learning objectives that are aligned to the curricula, thus providing opportunities for teachers to assess what their students understand through questioning and checklists that accompany learning tasks. In addition, teacher teams constructed rubrics and checklists aligned with the CCLS to assess student independence and accuracy. Inclusion students are exhibiting dramatic improvement in their decoding skills due to the introduction of Wilson Reading program.
 - Throughout lessons, teachers monitor student understanding in a variety of methods including "thumbs up" and the use of electronic student devices/assistive technology. Each student's work sample is assessed with the school's "portfolio rubric" that is aligned to their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) short term objectives. Additional information is provided in a Glow (what the student can do) and Grow (what are next steps) feedback form is filled out by teacher and student. This feedback allows teachers to adjust their lessons as needed. For example, teachers might need to reteach, provide additional visual supports such as graphic organizers, or cue cards. Paraprofessionals are used to provide one-to-one and/or small group support. Consistently, as observed in classroom visits, teachers provide students with time to self-monitor and partner with peers to review and revise work (if cognitively capable). Students use rubrics and checklists created by teacher teams that are student friendly by including icons and picture symbols. This has resulted in increased student ownership of their learning. In addition, the use of Joint Activity Routines (JAR) provides opportunities for students with communication disorders to demonstrate their skills.

- School leaders provide teachers with meaningful observation feedback, grounded in the Danielson Framework, to support professional growth towards goals, leading to improved teaching practices. (4.1)
 - School leaders have developed a strategic schedule to observe teachers on a frequent basis and provide timely, effective feedback that is aligned to teachers' professional goals with clear implementation of the recommendations, thus promoting teacher effectiveness. Student work produced during the lessons observed is referred to in written observation reports and referenced in feedback by school leaders along with supports and specific suggestions. The teacher's pedagogy is evaluated in depth with extensive detailed comments that clearly identifies strengths and challenges that are aligned to the school's developed feedback tools that focus on priority Danielson components (1e, 3b, 3d). Sixty-Seven percent (67%) of all teachers who scored "Developing" on one of the three priority components during the first walk-through, improved to "Effective" for that same component on the second walk-through. Fifty percent (50%) of all teachers who scored "Effective" on one of the three priority components on the first walk-through, improved to a "Highly Effective" for that same component on the second walk-through. This is attributed to the shared feedback and collaborative action taken.
 - The administration provides feedback to teachers that clearly highlights next steps for improvement and aligns to teachers' professional goals. In addition, classroom observations identified several patterns and trends aligned to the Danielson Framework that needed more focus. Specifically, there is a need to increase in the use of Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) high levels questions during discussions and allowing for more student independence. For example, during an early in the year informal observation of a middle school teacher, it was noted that components 2a and 2c were highly effective, components 3a, 3c, 3d and 3e were effective and 3b was developing. The administrator's feedback noted under 3b, "Students were asked to select a job to apply for and to answer why they wanted that particular job. A student answered, "Because I like it" without being challenged to extend their reasoning as to why they like it. Due to this need, additional training was provided. The administrative staff believes adults have different needs and professional development must be differentiated. All teachers have met individually with the administration and identified goals for the year – instructional and pedagogical. The administration made strategic decisions in offering targeted and tiered professional development aligned to teachers' goals. For example, team teaching, sharing and exchanging of students, intervisitations and mentoring, support new and struggling teachers in meeting their goals. Administrators consistently review student work products and data related to students' Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goal mastery, to correlate teacher practice to student performance. As a result of these creative teaching models and instructional supports, there has been a positive impact on student outcomes. Students exhibited an average of 6% increase on accuracy/independence related to targeted SANDI skills in Math.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance teacher questioning during the delivery of instruction in order to enrich student participation, thereby increasing opportunities to further develop critical thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Pedagogical practices reflect the school's core belief system on how students learn; being engaged in lessons that are functional, pragmatic, hands-on and experiential, peer-to peer interaction and student initiated work, providing supports only as needed. Teaching practices are closely aligned to a CCLS driven curriculum emphasizing students' functional and instructional levels. Specific elements of the Danielson Framework, such as grouping students by their cognitive levels, as well as their behavioral levels, are examples of how students are grouped by need. In addition, the school views the Danielson Framework as an objective tool across all sites, providing staff with a coherent lens that emphasizes best practices of teaching and learning. During classroom visits I heard teachers ask "Can you predict what will happen next?", "How are we alike?" and "How are we different?" Although the school has provided professional development on Webb's Depth of Knowledge and focused on Danielson's competencies outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), in some classrooms teachers used basic recall questions, which did not give students opportunities to expand on concepts, thus limiting the level of discussion. In addition, in some classrooms, staff found it difficult to "let-go" in relinquishing some of that responsibility to students to take ownership of their learning. For example, during a science lesson the teacher was reading the book "the Great Kapok Tree". The teacher asked "what lives in a tree?" and immediately showed the students pictures of the animals that lived in the tree rather than waiting for their response. As a result of this, some students did not have an opportunity to expand on concepts, therefore limiting the level of discussion to build critical thinking and challenge students to higher levels of engagement.
- Continue to extend the school's approach to culture building and social-emotional support to include a formal platform for students to participate in decision making processes and committees. (1.4)
 - There is a school-wide focus on building a culture of positive behavior intervention supports (PBIS) throughout the school in all classrooms. The school is supportive and inclusive of students and staff who work together to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning to take place. Students stated during the large team meeting that there is always an adult they can talk to. Administration stresses a team approach and expects all stakeholders to work cohesively to support the teaching of social and academic skills across all learning environments. All related service providers (psychologists, counselors, social workers, speech teachers) are part of the "team". If a student is having difficulty in school, whether academically or behaviorally, the formal grade-band teacher team will discuss the issues and provide suggestions to meet the needs of the individual child. In addition, the school has set up "virtual teacher meetings" via Facetime that has provided a forum for teachers to also build ties and share best practices, academically and behaviorally, across all sites. Students are well known by staff as a result of this "teaming" of staff to address concerns. There is a brand new student

government that helps plan events around the school; however, there is no formal venue that allows for student participation in decision-making processes, thus resulting in limited opportunities to engage student voice in school improvement efforts for social and academic growth.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: P077K	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