



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Thaddeus Stevens School

Elementary School K081

**990 DeKalb Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Cheryl Ault-Barker

Dates of review: March 18-19, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Santiago

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Thaddeus Stevens is an elementary school with 399 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 67% Black, 32% Hispanic, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has aligned the curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and engages students in learning experiences that result in increased student achievement. (1.1)
 - The school adopted the city wide curriculum 'Expeditionary Learning' in English language arts (ELA) and 'Go Math' in math that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and is working on refining the curriculum in content areas to further align to the CCLS during teacher team meetings. Teachers have developed monthly pacing charts and maps in all grade levels that list the curricula topics to be covered in all subject areas to ensure coherence. For example, in October grade two math topics included using place value to add and subtract numbers and the topic in social studies included identifying resources used in communities. Also, the school integrates the citywide instructional shifts with a focus on deepening the levels of questioning and increasing vocabulary in content areas and provides rigorous tasks across grades and subjects to push students' thinking. For example, in one math class the teacher had students use a model to show the product of a fraction and a whole number and had students explain the concept using math vocabulary such as "improper fractions" and "mixed numerals" during share out activities. In an ELA class the teacher used the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) rubric to ask questions such as "Why did the people build their homes along the river?" and "Explain, using text evidence to support your answers, why the people built canals." to push students' thinking and discussion on the impact of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers on the lives of the people living along the banks of the rivers. In a science class students engaged in activities using marbles to find how energy is transferred through matter and wrote their observations on post it notes and charts for reference during group share out. In addition, the school collaborates with museum residencies that provide hands on experiences with the arts and integrate art activities into the curriculum such as incorporating themes of the children's neighborhood and community. These exchanges are providing all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, opportunities to enrich their learning thus, accelerating progress in all subject areas.
- The principal has made schedule adjustments and organizational decisions that support school and instructional goals to increase student achievement. (1.3)
 - The school expressed that one of its goals is to increase the time students spend engaged in literacy activities to accelerate learning and performance. To that end, the school has incorporated a ninety minute block of time in the daily schedule for instruction in ELA. This has led to student progress in reading and writing skills as evidenced in assessment outcomes and student work. To increase the use of technology as an instructional tool, the school purchased a SMARTboard for every classroom and provided training for the teachers. The principal and teachers state that this has led to an increase in student motivation and

the use of technology to maximize learning. Also, the school maintains full time literacy and math coaches who work with teachers to improve instruction. The coaches have utilized the newly established United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Teachers' Center to conduct teacher workshops on creating questions aligned to the DOK rubric, conduct demonstration lessons on using text to support a claim and work one-on-one with teachers for individual support. In addition, the principal has allocated time for teachers to meet at least two times weekly to refine curriculum maps, analyze assessments and student work, plan instruction and share best practices. In one team meeting teachers reviewed student writing samples focusing on how well students' presented their opinions on a topic and the corroborating evidence cited by the students to support their claims. After discussing common areas of weakness in the writing that included students "going off on tangents", the teachers agreed to have students use graphic organizers to help them organize their thinking and stay on topic. Furthermore, in efforts to increase opportunities for teacher leadership and collaboration, teachers conduct inter-visitations and provide feedback to their colleagues on observations. These interactions have led teachers to express that they feel supported in their professional development and have increased their repertoire of instructional skills resulting in higher student achievement in literacy and math.

- Teachers use varied common assessment with ongoing checks for understanding that provide data to identify student learning needs, adjust instruction and support improved student mastery. (2.2)
 - Teachers and teacher teams capture and analyze data results for curricula and instructional planning. Teacher leaders meet weekly with the principal and assistant principal to review summative, periodic assessments and unit test results to determine progress of individual and groups of students and discuss implications for teaching across the grades. For example, the team found that a group of students continued to struggle with using details from a text to make inferences and accurately answer comprehension questions. This led to revising the unit of study to focus more on the needed skill. Classroom teachers gather data of common assessments in binders that include baseline data to determine measures of student learning (MOSL), unit tests in English language arts and math, rubrics and teacher designed tests. This information is used to evaluate student progress at the team and classroom levels in order to inform next steps for teaching and identify students in need of intervention. Student groups are established and instructional adjustments are made based on the outcomes of data collected. During lesson presentations teachers check for understanding through questioning, peer discussions and group and class share outs. For example, in a fourth grade class during a review of a previous lesson, the teacher asked students questions pertaining to freedoms guaranteed by the United States Constitution that include freedom of the press, freedom of religion and freedom of assembly. After discussions with their peers in their respective groups, students shared answers with the whole class as the teacher noted the accuracy of the responses. In another class, the teacher and paraprofessional each sat with a group of students during independent practice of a writing lesson and provided students with feedback for adjustment and engaged students in

discussions for next steps. This has led to students stating their goals to increase academic progress.

- The school has created a safe and respectful learning environment that nurtures and supports students' social and academic growth. (1.4)
 - The school guidance counselor works with teachers to conduct training on addressing the social and emotional needs of students and provides counseling for individual and groups of students identified in need of immediate support. For example, a plan of action that included academic and guidance support was designed for one student who was experiencing "an emotional crisis." As a result of the interventions provided, the student was named 'Student of the Month' for most improved. The school has also adopted various initiatives that include 'The Leader in Me Program' to create a positive and respectful school culture for the academic success of all students. Teachers received training and materials to implement the program that focuses on developing the seven habits of effective leaders via activities and opportunities that promote student leadership. This is evidenced in several of the school events initiated by the Student Government that meets monthly to discuss and offer input in decisions affecting the school community. For example, after receiving complaints from students regarding the cleanliness of the student bathrooms, the Student Government initiated a "Cleaner School" campaign that has resulted in all students participating in the school-wide effort to maintain a clean school environment. The school also developed 'The Reader in Me Program' to provide additional time for students who are not reading at home to engage in reading with the help of paraprofessionals assigned to the students. Additionally, in order to meet the needs of nearly twenty five percent of the students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) and target a population of students performing below grade level, school leaders and teachers meet with School Based Support Team (SBST) and the family worker to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps coordinate student services and resources to support the student's attendance, social, emotional and academic growth. This, along with the school's affiliations with organizations such as 'Xposure Foundation Inc.' that exposes students to science, technology, finance, employment and community services, 'Family Dynamics' an afterschool program that provides academic support and enrichment activities, 'Cool Culture' that provides parents and students free access to museums, parks and zoos throughout the city and 'Collaborative Opera-Based Learning and Teaching' (COBALT) that has students create original operas based on classroom curriculum, have contributed to varied learning opportunities and greater student engagement. As a result of structures in place to support social and academic growth, the school maintains a low number of incidents and suspensions and student attendance remains at over ninety percent.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop greater consistency in instructional tasks that include multiple entry points at high levels to address the instructional needs of all students and support deep thinking in preparation for college and careers. (1.2)

- School leaders use the Danielson Framework across the grades and subscribe to the belief that children learn best through tasks that generate higher order thinking and discussions, along with addressing individual student needs using multiple entry points. This was evidenced in some classrooms via lesson activities and student work products. For example, in one classroom the teacher had the students working in groups using visuals such as graphic organizers, videos and leveled reading materials and had the paraprofessional work with a designated group of students to scaffold support. In another classroom, the teacher had the students discuss with their peers the characters and events in a historical fiction text to determine the story theme followed by having the students write an essay about the theme with supporting details. However, these practices were inconsistent throughout the school. In some classrooms visited, lessons were delivered in whole group settings and discussions were mainly teacher dominated which resulted in minimally meaningful conversations and student interactions with few opportunities for students, including student subgroups, to engage in rigorous learning tasks. In addition, student notebooks did not consistently reflect students' differentiated needs and student folders consisted mostly of worksheet exercises. Furthermore, student work samples displayed on bulletin boards in some classrooms did not demonstrate thinking at high levels in all subject areas and did not address the varied needs of students thus, limiting opportunities to promote higher order thinking and skill development needed to show progress and academic growth for all students.
- Enhance systems in place in all content areas to evaluate school-wide initiatives, programs and policies and adjust practices to ensure student achievement. (5.1)
 - The principal and assistant principal engage in instructional meetings twice monthly with teacher leaders that include the ELA and math coaches to review classroom data and discuss student progress and next steps. The group analyzes assessment results in unit tests, periodic assessments and formative assessments with integrated science and social studies topics aligned to the CCLS to determine progress at the classroom and school levels. One finding from these reviews identified a need for students to strengthen the culminating paragraphs on their written essays. This led to having teachers incorporate strategies such as, increasing modeling during mini-lessons for reinforcement of the learning. In addition, the principal and assistant principal conduct observations and walkthroughs to monitor the quality of instructional practices, alignment of the CCLS and use of the Danielson Framework across the school and provide verbal and written feedback for improvement. Teachers collaborate during inter-visitations and offer each other feedback on observed practices and areas for improvement. Furthermore, school leaders meet with teachers one to one to discuss identified areas for growth and periodically join teacher team meetings to support the teams' work. Information gathered from these conversations and inquiries is used to plan next steps and make the needed adjustments to improve practices. However, while the school analyzes the Learning Environment Survey (LES), a school-wide system to evaluate the school culture is not yet fully implemented. This lessens opportunities to adjust resources and practices to maximize student progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Thaddeus Stevens Elementary 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