

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Verrazano

Elementary School P.S. 101

**2360 Benson Avenue
Brooklyn
NY, 11214**

Principal: Gregg Korrol

Dates of review: December 11, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Isabel DiMola

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Verrazano is an Elementary school with 894 students from Pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 16% Hispanic, 30% White, and 53% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well- developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Across subject areas curricula aligns to the Common Core Learning Standards providing all students with access to rigorous tasks, promoting higher order thinking, and the necessary skills to be on a path to college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - Deep data analysis of individual student and student subgroup progress and performance drives curriculum development across the school allowing for a clear understanding of the needs of all students. Teacher teams create units of study that align to the Common Core Standards, integrate the instructional shifts and specifically outline scaffolds to ensure that all students including English language learners and students with disabilities receive access to content and skill development. Also embedded within curricula are the skills and behaviors that promote college and career readiness including persistence, engagement, organizational skills, work habits, communication and self-regulation. This results in curricula and instructional coherence throughout the school with clear pathways for students to achieve academic and personal goals. For example, data reveals that there is a need for students to have opportunities to answer high-level questions that promote rich, meaningful discussion that leads to writing tasks where students can clearly express a claim, idea or argument supported by text and conceptual understandings. As such, units of study demonstrate a focus on higher order questioning, opportunities for discussion and tasks that promote cognitive challenge with specific scaffolds ensuring access for all learners and clear articulation of practice to build personal attributes and behaviors necessary for academic and social success.
 - Through close analysis of student assessments and student work teachers plan and refine curricula and tasks to ensure that courses of study reflect the learning needs of all students. This is evident throughout unit plans across grades and content areas. For example, data and student work products revealed that fourth grade students were having difficulty crafting a paragraph with a well-developed topic sentence and meaningful conclusion. The grade's teacher team revised the unit of study to focus more on the necessary skills, while moving some topics to other points in the unit or curriculum and eliminating those skills or content strands that did not meet the needs of students. Fourth grade students including English language learners and students with disabilities are demonstrating an understanding of how to structure a paragraph with the appropriate parts and most students are showing progress in how they use language to engage readers in their writing. Across grades and content areas, teachers use student work and data to ensure that curricula are planned and refined resulting in opportunities for students to engage in rigorous learning including access to tasks that are cognitively challenging and are purposeful in aligning to the school's vision of what it means to be on a trajectory to college and career readiness.
- Teacher pedagogy consistently demonstrates instructional coherence and effective differentiated practices that scaffolds learning for all students resulting in improving student performance across the school. (1.2)
 - The philosophy of the school is that instruction should lead to all students being engaged and inspired toward growing into individuals that possess the cognitive tools to solve problems and articulate ideas and beliefs. The pedagogy across the school supports the vision through instructional

practice that provides all students access to the curriculum. Lesson planning provides for whole class, or group instruction followed by an on demand assessment. The assessments are used to make grouping decisions in real time so that they are offered a task that is at an appropriate entry point for their level of skill and understanding or an opportunity to engage in a guided group where the teaching point is discussed using different strategies than initially introduced. The tasks that the student groupings are offered are engaging and cognitively challenging where students can demonstrate higher order thinking skills. However, they are differentiated with varying scaffolds to ensure that there are supports, extensions and enrichment for the various needs of all learners. Technology is embedded in most lessons giving English language learners an additional tool to access the content and develop language skills. Throughout the school, students engage in discussions where they ask and answer complex questions and create work products that are evidence of high-level student thought. For example, a third grade class was working on solving two-step problems. While one group met with the teacher for a reteach activity, the remainder of the class sat in groups where they worked in pairs in varying activities that met their learning needs. The student pairs were actively engaged in meaningful discussions about strategies and mathematical concepts toward solving the problems. When finished, students had the opportunity to self-assess their work, and then engage in enrichment that asked them to use what they had learned to create two-step problems for their partner to answer. Following the activity, students used journals to reflect on their learning, as a method of self-assessment where students express ownership of the learning. The school's instructional practices demonstrate an understanding of the Common Core Learning Standards, and the instructional shifts that result in student progress toward learning targets, with a majority of students attaining grade level results on English language arts and math summative assessments at the end of each unit of study.

- Leaders make effective, strategic organizational decisions that align with school instructional goals and support all efforts toward improving student learning. (1.3)
 - Organizational decisions align to school-wide goals and provide students and student subgroups with opportunities to accelerate progress across all content areas. As the school's immigrant population grows, there is an increase in the number of students with limited English proficiency and data reveals that the structure of services for these students are not leading to desired gains. As such, the programming this year provides a team-teaching model for English language learner classes with licensed English as second language teachers push in and co-teach for several periods each day giving students more support in targeted instruction than required by mandate and allows these students to remain in their primary class instead of being pulled out for instruction. The students also engage in the school's large investment in technology that includes Smart Boards in every classroom, laptops and I-Pad carts throughout the school and a plethora of software to address individual and group student needs. For example, Imagine Learning allows students with little or no English proficiency to engage in language acquisition activities as an initial entry point into the curriculum. In addition, to support early grade literacy development, a cluster position for Orton-Gillingham, a program for literacy instruction, allows for regular push-in to Kindergarten through grade two classes so that students have this specific instruction by a fully trained expert teacher in the program. This model serves to not only ensure that students receive strong literacy and phonics instruction, but allows teachers new to the school that have not been trained in the program to observe the practice by a teacher expert and build their capacity toward independently offering the program to their students. As a result, English language learners are demonstrating accelerated progress in language development through formative assessments, writing tasks and

verbal communication and students receiving Orton-Gillingham instruction are making gains with a majority of these students testing on grade level on reading assessments.

- Teacher leaders meet twice a week to collaborate on developing curricula, including units of study, lesson plans and cognitively challenging tasks to measure student performance and progress. These sessions are supported by the administration and a literacy coach and ensure that there is a coherent curriculum in use across the school that aligns to the Common Core Learning Standards. A vertical team that rotates teacher participants every six weeks meets weekly, where teachers study the impact of curricula and teaching practice across the grades and studies data to uncover where and how the curricula across grades needs to be revised. The work of this team is brought to the grade level inquiry teams that meet at least weekly to study student work and the impact of instruction on student learning. As a result, teachers are focusing on how their curricula development, planning and pedagogy is affecting student learning with a specific focus on the overarching school goals of providing students with opportunities to engage in high level discussions and to create pieces of work that demonstrate critical thinking and mastery of standards. Consequently, there is instructional coherence across the school with most teachers demonstrating effective pedagogy, and student work product evidencing student growth toward reaching and exceeding learning targets, as evidenced by a vast majority of students making progress on an embedded writing task with 75% of students performing at or above grade level as measured by a school-wide writing rubric.
- Across classrooms, teacher use common, formative and summative assessments to understand student progress and adjust curricula and instruction to support student growth toward reaching the Common Core Learning Standards. (2.2)
 - At the start of each unit of study, all teachers give pre-assessments to understand student beginning skill level, content and concepts. These baseline assessments drive teacher preparation and lead to daily lesson plans with flexible grouping and appropriate scaffolds for individual and student groups. For each task, whether formative or summative, a rubric guides students and clearly articulates expectations. Students understand the grading policies and strive to move their performance to the next level. Teacher feedback is extremely specific, not only to the rubric standards but to the actual places in work product where students need to make adjustments to demonstrate learning. An example of teacher feedback is, "although you gave details about the setting in paragraph two, more details about the character's thoughts and feelings about the situation would allow the reader to be more engaged and allow for greater understanding of the character's actions." In speaking with the student receiving the feedback, she explains, "I understand what I need to do to reach the expectations in my writing because my teacher is very clear in what I need to do." In every lesson, checks for understanding allow teachers to gather real time data that leads to students engaging in tasks that provide appropriate access to the content. Students articulate an understanding of why they are in their assigned groups and recognize their next learning steps and necessary actions to make progress toward reaching the standards. Students are given multiple opportunities to self-assess and collaborate with their teacher to determine when they are ready for next steps, resulting in partnerships between students and teachers and a transparent understanding of where students are toward reaching and exceeding learning goals. For example, data shows that there is a 52% gain in the number of 4th grade students reaching or exceeding standards on a post unit assessment with 89% of the grade inclusive of special education students and English language learners scoring at or above grade level and at risk students are achieving gains in

reading with an average growth of 1.5 grade levels over the course of the semester.

- School leaders support a high level of pedagogy through effective evaluation of instruction aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching resulting in strong teacher practice across the school positively affecting student learning. (4.1)
 - School leaders use student data, teacher observation and the needs of the Common Core Learning Standards to set school-wide instructional goals. It is clearly communicated that there is an expectation that instruction is highly engaging for students, building their capacity to solve problems, express ideas, and use text to support their claims. To that end, the school is focusing on developing teacher ability to provide students with high-level questions that encourage meaningful discussion that lead to cognitive challenge and high quality student work. A system of teacher support includes new teacher mentoring, peer support and class intervisitations. A schedule of frequent observations allows supervisors to provide ongoing feedback that details next steps for teachers in alignment with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Ongoing conversations and written feedback address instruction, student data and student work with a focus on building instructional strategies to positively impact student learning. School leaders continually analyze data from teacher observation to understand teacher skill and impact on student learning. Professional development plans for the school, individual and groups of teachers align to the data resulting in improving teacher practice. Teachers articulate feeling supported by administration, appreciate the opportunities for professional growth and feel safe to be honest about their professional needs. Consequently, there is growing competency among the faculty in ability to use high level questioning to engage students in meaningful discussion thereby moving the school toward reaching its overall goals.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the processes used to measure the effectiveness of school level decisions to ensure that all practices lead to the intended outcomes for all students across the school. (5.1)
 - School leaders have formal structures in place that purposefully collect performance data, student work product and teacher evaluation scores to measure the effectiveness of curricular and instructional decisions across the school. There are processes that evaluate school culture and organizational decisions, with protocols for collecting data and sharing outcomes school wide. The principal, assistant principals and coaches work closely with the teacher teams to evaluate the work of teams and provide ongoing professional development to expand capacity of their work in understanding and implementing the CCLS. However, the structures to ensure that the evaluation of the work of teams is purposeful and articulated in a manner that clearly makes the connection between pedagogic practice and student outcomes is not yet fully embedded to deeply assess this aspect of team work, and therefore does not yield a complete understanding of how instruction is accelerating student progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: P.S. 101 The Verrazano	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 need				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	