



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Monitor School

Elementary School 110

**124 Monitor Street
Brooklyn
NY 11222**

Principal: Anna Cano Amato

Dates of review: February 26 - 27, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Monitor School is an elementary school with 346 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 36% Hispanic, 55% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions to build coherence in curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with emphasis on challenging tasks for all learners. (1.1)
 - The leadership's decision, in collaboration with the faculty, to implement Ready Gen in English language arts and Go Math, both Department of Education recommended programs, supported the school's common planning approaches. Thus the integration of instructional shifts such as teaching content specific and academic vocabulary, balancing informational and literary text, or writing and speaking about math understanding, are embedded in lesson and unit plans across grade levels. The school also implements the science curriculum that promotes investigative approach and integrates literacy skills. Science unit plans are aligned to speaking, reading, and writing standards, and include scientific thinking processes to conduct investigations along with the use of precise and domain-specific vocabulary in discussions and writing. Lessons and unit plans in literacy, social studies, and math, consistently include enduring understandings such as incorporating multiple resources and exploring content for research, and as a result, all students have opportunities to build upon prior knowledge and make real-life and content connections in the context of reading informational text or learning about fractions. Fourth grade students, for example, were asked to investigate concepts such as how to name and write fractions and explored equivalence by activating their prior knowledge, by charting, labeling, and organizing their concepts of sharing the same amount of chocolate. Tasks in social studies involve gathering information, taking notes, and categorizing the information from multiple books and articles. Consequently, all students from kindergarten to grade 5 have opportunities to learn life-long academic skills that prepare them for college and career.
 - A review of curriculum artifacts revealed that teachers support their students in developing higher order skills by planning questions for team talk and rigorous daily tasks. Reading and writing lesson plans, for example, include questions such as, "How do writers group information logically, with supporting visuals?" and "Why were Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln good leaders?" In addition, teachers plan performance tasks for identified groups to engage all students in learning by matching anticipated outcomes of lessons with teaching points. Unit and lesson plans culminate with tasks such as selecting a topic for conducting an investigative research, writing short response citing evidence and details to support opinions, and giving reasons for solving multi-step math word problems. Lesson plans also have strategies for close reading, small group coaching with manipulatives, include graphic organizers, and focus on vocabulary development and support. As a result, all students across grades, including English language learners and students with disabilities participate in rigorous, standards-based curricula.

- The principal makes strategic decisions to use resources in alignment with school goals that result in strengthened instructional capacity, professional collaboration, and improved student work across the school. (1.3)
 - All students from prekindergarten to grade 5 are intentionally scheduled for science, music, visual arts, technology, and Italian instruction. The principal also allocates funds to ensure the continuity of a grant-based French dual language program, now in its third year of implementation. Therefore, all students from pre-kindergarten to grade 5 have opportunities to extend their academic knowledge by learning foreign languages and exploring different cultures. Using many grants, the school also gives all students multiple possibilities to apply their acquired skills in Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) activities by including planting and experimenting with solar energy, culminating with an annual Green Science Week. Moreover, the administration, in collaboration with upper grade teachers, decided to continue the subject area departmentalization in grades 4 and 5, thus building on teacher content expertise with a purposeful focus on meeting grade level and school academic goals aligned with the CCLS. This strategic commitment to departmentalization has resulted in successful interdisciplinary approach to instruction as evident in improved student performance in writing short and extended response to tasks. For example, all fourth and fifth grade students researched the correlation between animal skeletons and the way they move, and used facts, details, and examples from different texts in their written response. These organizational decisions and instructional initiatives, supported by strategic partnerships, are effectively extending learning opportunities that connect to the school's vision of creating a community of life-long learners and have resulted in increased academic rigor evident in meaningful student responses to tasks that integrate instructional shifts in literacy and math.
 - All teachers are deliberately scheduled two to three times a week to work on teams to plan units, lessons, and academic tasks, as reflected in the school's weekly program. Special education and English as a second language (ESL) teachers meet frequently with both vertical and horizontal teams to develop lessons, action plans, and tasks for targeted students. Similarly, a vertical team of dual language teachers meets regularly to work on the alignment of their curriculum with the CCLS and to effectively implement the French and English instruction. In addition, the entire faculty meets twice a month, specifically for collaborative inquiry with the purpose of following a student work analysis protocol for analysis of common assessment results. Moreover, teachers collaboratively craft teaching and learning points, identify gaps, and plan strategies to engage students in learning, thus working toward the school's goal to improve student academic achievement. Consequently, all teachers have planned and structured opportunities to advance their professional capacity along with working on the improvement of academic tasks, demonstrating impact by students' increased ability to cite evidence from the text when discussing or writing about tasks.
- The school has created a safe and respectful environment, conducive to learning and collaboration, where students receive support in their personal and academic development. (1.4)

- Parents, students, and teachers say the school is welcoming and inclusive. Families also say they are valued and invited to participate in the school's life by volunteering in the classrooms, the school library, or to work on various committees. The school has also adopted the 7 Habits of Happy Kids and Effective People, the core of the Leader in Me program, that are intentionally implemented across grade levels in support of the academic, social, and emotional growth of all students, with a purpose of maintaining a trusting and safe school environment. Additionally, parent and student interviews revealed that teachers and leaders embed habits like "be proactive" and "have a plan" in daily lessons, thus providing common language for discussing responsibilities and strategies to meet the academic and social and emotional challenges. Moreover, students have opportunities to develop leadership roles in a student council by suggesting activities, and they take on roles such as lunchroom table captains, homework monitors, or classroom tutors, thus leading and promoting school improvements. The school also has a full time guidance counselor who facilitates, together with the parent coordinator, immediate response, interventions, and contacts with families of identified at-risk students provides them with external resources. She also leads a child study team that meets weekly and focuses on the needs of individual students, therefore assisting students and families with mandated and at-risk services, holding parent meetings, and collaborating with teachers and support staff on developing individualized guidance and social and emotional learning improvement plans. Similarly, the school's full time occupational therapist regularly helps students, families, and teachers by sharing specific strategies to improve personal behaviors. Furthermore, teachers are prepared to guide students' academic and social and emotional learning with deliberately implemented professional development and training they receive from the Leader in Me facilitators. As a result of these efforts, the number of safety or behavior infractions is very low, as evidenced in the school's Online Occurrence Report System and minimal disruptions in class. Additionally, the most recent New York City School Survey indicates that parents and teachers rate the school's efforts in safety and respect very high.

- The leadership rallies the school community around the vision to educate the whole child, leading efforts to improve pedagogy and accelerate student growth. (3.1)
 - The school is the recipient of the Educating the Whole Child for the 21st Century New York State award that, along with the school's mission, summarizes its long-range goal of providing all students with safe, healthy, engaging, supporting, and academically challenging environment. School leaders, in collaboration with teachers, clearly defined this year's focus for school improvement around a short list of goals: building teacher capacity in the use of assessment results, creating structures for collaborative inquiry leading to strategic student small group instruction, enhancing parent involvement, and improving academic and personal behaviors with the implementation of the Leader in Me program. The principal's instructional team initially assessed the school's needs based on the last year's teacher practice observations, student achievement data, recommendations from the last Quality Review, and results of the school survey, and aligned them with this

year's Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). As part of the strategic work and on-going efforts to meet the goals, school leaders and teachers develop and adjust action plans by systematic monitoring of student progress through the use of performance-based assessments, end-of-unit assessments, and writing rubrics. In addition, the school leaders purposefully utilize observation cycles and teacher professional goals as interim checkpoints to inform and thoughtfully adjust professional development planning, continually providing feedback and support. Recently, the leadership revised instructional goals to focus pedagogical efforts on using assessments in instruction to better meet identified students' needs. Similarly, student goals were added to the Leader in Me program to leverage classroom changes by linking student reflection on work products to effective habits and personal behaviors, evidenced in student leadership notebooks. Moreover, the school's professional development plan, from September on, strategically addresses teachers' coherence in planning and lesson preparation in subject and content areas, understanding of the Danielson Framework, and promoting the transformative model for building student leadership. Therefore, teachers across classrooms improved their practice in planning for flexible groups using the assessment results, while student academic and social-emotional progress monitoring has resulted in increased success in completion of tasks by all students across subjects.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance instructional practices across the school to consistently provide multiple entry points and opportunities for all students to demonstrate higher order thinking and standards' mastery. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers are beginning to plan essential questions for every day instruction and use high order questioning techniques in lessons. In some classrooms we visited, teachers used "how" and "why" open-ended questions. For example, in most classes we heard teachers ask, "How do you know?" or "Why is it important to know?" However, in a few classrooms, teachers asked questions that were mostly recalling information. Similarly, in most classes, students are grouped for learning and engaged in discussions about tasks, and we saw students participating in team talk and partnerships during independent small group work. In one class, all students were engaged in experiments investigating effects of water and they were accessing vocabulary words from the word wall. However, in another class, students used manipulatives to solve math problems, but the task and materials were the same for all students. As a result, although most teachers engage students in discussions, the use of strategic scaffolds or extensions and multiple entry points varies across classrooms, thus limiting student acceleration of learning.
- Increase teacher understanding and use of data from common assessments to provide actionable feedback to students and make adjustments to meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
 - The school collects student achievement data from multiple assessments, and grade-level teachers receive data reports from baseline and benchmark performance assessments that determine student grouping

for Response to Intervention (RtI) tiered support. Additionally, teachers administer reading running records, skills inventories, and begin analyzing student work and outlining next instructional steps in collaborative inquiry. For example, a vertical team of fourth and fifth grade teachers looked at samples of student writing from a short response, and identified gaps in academic vocabulary and using text evidence. For special education students and English language learners they discussed adding visuals and graphic organizers in instruction. As a result, teachers begin making lesson adjustments with specific next steps. Moreover, teachers and leaders use standards-based rubrics to assess student writing and problem solving and, in some classes, students reflect on their completion of tasks and engage in peer-feedback using these rubrics and checklists. Similarly, the school introduced individual student assessment trackers to promote self-monitoring and self-assessment. Even though these efforts are leading to the next instructional steps, individual teacher feedback is not always actionable for students to use in order to improve their academic performance. Similarly, specific teacher feedback to students is not consistent across classrooms, thus not providing all students with next steps and strategies to achieve grade level mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Monitor 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