



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Carlos Tapia

Elementary School 120

**18 Beaver Street
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Liza Caraballo-Suarez

Dates of review: February 11-12, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Carlos Tapia is an elementary school with 468 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 87% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions to offer rich curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with emphasis on coherence and access for all learners. (1.1)
 - Math lessons and unit plans, guided by grade level standards, emphasize benchmarks and expectations, while literacy units consistently contain big ideas and enduring understandings. Furthermore, all teachers strategically embed the school's multicultural education themes and project-based units of study by integrating social studies and science with literacy units, hence engaging all students in extended opportunities to research geography and history, and promoting reading and writing of informational and complex text. Students are challenged to use multiple sources of information to answer essential questions like "How are volcanoes formed and why do people live near volcanoes?", or "What influence did the Dutch have on New York's culture today?" Moreover, this year's science fair purposefully integrated research writing to further support reading and writing informational text. A review of curriculum artifacts revealed that teachers and leaders strategically embed instructional shifts in lesson and unit plans, with deliberate emphasis on academic and content vocabulary, writing from different sources, or fluency, problem solving and demonstrating math understanding. In all classrooms visited, the coherent planning of intentional word walls included current content vocabulary, including math, alongside literary and project related words with their definitions, that students easily accessed during writing or discussions was apparent. As a result, all students across the grades have many opportunities to experience engaging curricula that deepens their thinking, hence preparing them for the demands of the standards and future college and careers.
 - The school's inquiry work influences the instructional adjustments to curricula and tasks that are refined during vertical and horizontal teacher team meetings. The analysis of student writing on demand prompted a school-wide collaborative decision to infuse the Teachers' College writing units into the English language arts curricula with the goal of supporting all learners in their written responses to reading. Furthermore, teachers across the grades analyze data from standardized and common assessments to plan extensions and supports for individual and groups of students, including English language learners and higher achieving students as evidenced in reviewed lesson and unit plans and in teacher team meetings. Likewise, teachers adjust units and lessons by adding strategies from professional workshops and online resources, or from the Universal Design for Learning such as charts, graphic organizers, or pictorials. Subsequently, all students, including English language learners and special education students are able to access curricula and tasks, thus demonstrating improved reading comprehension as indicated in their written responses to literature tasks.

- Teachers consistently use and analyze common assessments and effectively make instructional adjustments guiding student awareness of next learning steps leading to increased mastery. (2.2)
 - The school uses a wide range of common assessments including standards-based rubrics for writing and math tasks that are embedded in units of study, along with reading running records, and student performance on short and extended responses to reading, in order to analyze student work and make instructional adjustments. Teachers and leaders have also created a grading policy aligned with the assessments and adjusted periodic progress reports for parents to indicate student growth toward grade level benchmarks with strategies for advancement. Therefore, parents and students receive timely and meaningful feedback regarding achievement. In addition, teachers in all grades create rubrics and checklists in student-friendly language, thus increasing student ability to self-assess. Students, for example, reflect on what they did well and then write next steps like, “I need to improve my conclusion”, or “The way I could show an equivalent fraction is to multiply the numerator and the denominator by 2.” Additionally, students set goals for reading, writing, and math achievement, such as “My goal in writing is to accurately answer all parts of a prompt by using details”. In addition to teacher monitoring of student progress through ongoing assessments, students use goal trackers and chart their growth towards goals, thus demonstrating how they follow steps toward mastery of content subjects and skills. Likewise, teachers and leaders constantly analyze student achievement results and student work making adjustments in lessons, units and instruction as it was evident in class visits. Consequently, teachers’ effective use of student results and checks for understanding to plan teaching points and flexible groups ensures that adequate planning supports student progress toward meeting grade level benchmarks and standards by all students, including English language learners and special education students. As a result, the school is closing the achievement gap between males and females as measured by the grade 4 and 5 benchmark performance assessment in reading literary and informational text. Additionally, 64% of English language learners in grade four moved up one or more levels in reading between September and January as evidenced in the school’s tracking of this identified group of students.

- The principal strategically aligns resources with school goals promoting teacher collaborations and college and career readiness for all students. (1.3)
 - By sustaining the past magnet grant multicultural theme and the Leader in Me program embedded in academic curriculum, the school has solidified its focus on the improvement of instruction, student achievement and home-school communication. Research and projects, a core of the school’s theme, support college readiness for all students. This year, the principal, in collaboration with network support, secured funds for extended learning opportunities for students and adults through The Leader in Me organization, thereby providing students, families and teachers, including those in pre-kindergarten classes, with the framework for strengthening social and emotional well-being. This has resulted in a common understanding of the school and student goals and action steps to achieve them as evident in individual student goal monitoring binders.

Other partnerships with Cornell University and New York University, also aligned with this program, support families and promote home-school partnership. The principal's strategic programming of extracurricular science, visual arts, technology, and physical education for all students provides ample time for teachers to meet and collaboratively plan with grade level teams. Likewise, thoughtful scheduling of English as a second language and special education teachers provide targeted academic supports for identified students and plan differentiated instruction. An intervention teacher, for example, was hired to specifically work with second and third grade classes on closing the achievement gap between early childhood and upper grades. Similarly, grade level teachers are strategically matched with groups of students, based on their recognized instructional strengths, while paraprofessionals are also deliberately assigned to work with individual teachers and students based on recommendations from the Pupil Personnel Team, maximizing interventions for at-risk students. Moreover, the school budget is utilized to provide extended day academic reinforcement and interventions for English language learners and after school and Saturday programs for over 100 identified students at-risk, in addition to the morning tutorials or guided reading and *Words Their Way* decoding program during the school day. Currently, reading running record assessment data shows 64% of fourth grade English language learners moved up one or more levels between September and January, preparing them for the next academic challenges. Thus, professional collaborations also hold teachers accountable for working together to support students' progress and partnerships and intensify learning opportunities by way of strategies with extensions and supports to the core academic program for diverse students, supporting the school in meeting its goal of increasing student performance.

- The school upholds a safe and inclusive environment where students respect each other and social-emotional learning supports student success and adult learning. (1.4)
 - Classrooms and hallways emanate with exceptionally respectful and inclusive tone and culture. All students, teachers and parents are actively engaged in the, Leader in Me program that is purposefully implemented across grade levels in support of maintaining the trusting and safe environment. Students have opportunities to develop leadership roles in the Lighthouse Team where they serve as advisors and contribute ideas to make the school a better place, leading to initiatives like reading buddies and student or classroom coaches during lunch. They also collaboratively develop individual class mission statements with teachers, thus promoting behavior improvement efforts throughout the school. In addition, the parent coordinator and a social worker conduct weekly book clubs and workshops, focused on, the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People or healthy living, thus supporting families with successful academic and social-emotional strategies they can use with their children. Additionally, parent and student interviews revealed that teachers embed habits like “be proactive” and “put first things first” in daily curriculum, thus nurturing traits such as responsibility when students do their work before they play, therefore preparing them for next steps. Moreover, everyone in the school, including students in classrooms, speaks about approaches such as considering another person's point of view, responding thoughtfully or prioritizing, impacting positively on student academic and personal

behaviors. Teachers and staff also participate in professional development aligned to the Leader in Me program, thus ensuring that each student receives appropriate supports from at least one adult. The principal knows all the students and has a team of staff who develop individualized plans for identified students and families. Children who live in temporary housing, for example, receive a “safe haven” protocol ensuring they can always talk to adults in school in a risk-free environment. As a result of these efforts, the scores on the most recent New York City School Survey for school-home communication and safety improved, as evident on the school Online Occurrence Report System.

- Collaborative teacher teams lead the school inquiry work and the implementation of the standardized curricula resulting in improved student learning and mastery across grade levels. (4.2)
 - The vast majority of teachers have multiple opportunities to work on vertical and horizontal inquiry teams that meet regularly and purposefully plan and adjust curricula, analyze student assessment results and formulate next instructional steps, following the inquiry protocol for looking at student work. For example, the fifth grade team identified the importance of vocabulary building and the use of word walls and descriptive adjectives across grade levels to improve student success in writing on demand. The kindergarten team initiated meeting with the first grade team to discuss supports for small group instruction to improve student mastery of phonics. Additionally, a cross-grade data inquiry team, led by a data specialist, focuses on identifying trends school-wide and discusses benchmarks and academic expectations, as well as strategies for groups of students to move them towards goal attainment by planning scaffolds such as graphic organizers. A review of inquiry protocols, grade team agendas and teacher meetings revealed that teachers systematically collaborate on the implementation of the curricula and use this time to turnkey professional development or share resources they research or develop as a means to improve their practice. This has resulted in enhancing the instructional capacity of all teachers in planning and preparation, student engagement and using assessments to adjust lessons and units for different groups of learners. Teachers are also heading improvement plans. They made changes in extended day intervention groups strategically matching upper and lower grade tutors with students so all pedagogues better understand benchmarks across grade levels and apply strategies identified in inquiry teams, leading to support for all learners. Students are showing improvement by adding more supporting details and text evidence in their writing seen on classroom displays, consequently showing progress toward meeting their individual writing goals as recorded in their self-monitoring goal trackers. Furthermore, students demonstrate mastery as evidenced in the school's reading running records data indicating 82% of third grade students and 45% of second grade students improved by two levels between the fall and winter benchmark assessments.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance instructional practices across the school so that in all classrooms students are challenged to demonstrate higher order thinking through discussion and questioning. (1.2)

- Across classrooms teachers scaffold instruction and consistently provide multiple entry points to facilitate student participation through flexible grouping, guided practice, word walls, pictorials, graphic organizers, technology and the use of manipulatives. Additionally, as observed during classroom visits, students are able to access resources placed strategically in every classroom across the school. In most classes we visited students worked in groups, and discussed tasks prompted by differentiated teacher questions. However, although teachers engage students in discussions by asking probing questions, the use of strategic scaffolds, extensions and high quality supports is not yet fully in place. In one class, for example, a teacher encouraged student groups to make convincing arguments about keeping animals in zoos. In another class, a teacher directed students to solve and create problems with unlike denominators by using different strategies from the math center. Teachers' attempt to raise the level of student participation in discussions is sometimes limited to answering a group question or problem, thus limiting opportunities for all learners to extend inquisitive thinking beyond teacher directed questions.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Carlos Tapia P.S. 120	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