



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Suydam School

K123

**100 Irving Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11237**

Principal: Veronica Greene

Dates of review: February 11-12, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Lillian Druck

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Suydam School is an elementary school with 847 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 91% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% other students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal effectively organizes resources, partnerships, and time to build teacher capacity and support the instructional goals, to achieve success in accelerating student learning. (1.3)
 - Staffing and partnership programs are key to building success as evidenced for example by two part time literacy specialists and a full time literacy coach who assist teachers in unpacking the new English language arts programs for effective implementation and coherency across grades. The literacy coach specifically conducts model lessons and works with individual teachers and teams on planning effective lessons and teaching units to support the school's instructional goals. Furthermore, a partnership with BOKS (Building Our Kids' Success) provides free fitness-based activities for students before the start of the school day twice a week. This program provides a physical education instructor who engages students in non-competitive games and teaches them the benefits of good nutrition, in alignment with the school's goal to increase health awareness. Additionally, the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program was switched from grades 2, 3, and 4, to kindergarten and grade 1, based on reading assessment results, which indicated wide reading gaps in the early grades. Three trained LLI teachers provide supplementary instruction to targeted students in kindergarten and grade 1 to strengthen early literacy skills and prepare students for the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in subsequent grades. The LLI data shows long term positive results and maintenance of reading gains after students exit the program, as reflected in Fountas and Pinnell assessments. For example, 70% of the students in grades 2, 3 and 4 who participated in LLI last year demonstrated between one and 12 gains in their instructional reading levels from June through January. The data for students participating in LLI this school year indicates that all students increased between one and four instructional reading levels from September through January. Therefore, the principal's purposeful organizational decisions and effective utilization of available resources maximize the school's efforts to meet students' needs as noted in Common Core aligned assessment results and work products displayed on bulletin boards.
 - Teacher teams meet during common planning time, Town Hall periods, and weekly inquiry sessions, to analyze student work, surface misconceptions, discuss strategies for improvement, and plan challenging tasks to increase student learning. For example, the first grade team identified five math problems that most students failed to answer correctly following the analysis of midline assessment data. The team discussed and charted current student thinking, desired outcomes and implications for instruction. Charts listing the team's findings included the use of manipulatives such as inter-locking cubes, pan balances, counters, and articulation with teachers who service students during extended day sessions. Similarly, following a baseline math item analysis, grade 5 teachers identified students lacking pre-requisite skills on questions assessing understanding of fractions. Following intensive targeted

instruction, including small group sessions, visuals, and extended time, learning outcomes for identified students improved as noted in an increase of 20% correct responses on fraction questions in the midline assessments.

- The school's embedded structures contribute to an inclusive and caring environment that promotes learning and enhances students' academic skills and personal growth. (1.4)
 - The Responsive Classroom approach builds on the school's positive climate, enhances students' social emotional skills, and ensures progress toward creating a safe, joyful, and nurturing environment. This research-based philosophy includes key practices such as daily morning meetings, a proactive approach to discipline, and positive teacher language in classrooms, which support students' social and academic growth. During morning meetings, students greet each other and prepare for the day ahead by making connections to academic topics and goals, thereby engaging in learning experiences that develop their social and communication skills. Students' ideas and voices contribute to school improvements. For example, a group of students participating in extended day activities launched a campaign to paint the school cafeteria by writing letters to persuade home improvement and corporate businesses to pay for the cost of the beautification project. As a result of their efforts, the school received paint from Benjamin Moore, volunteer assistance from a local nonprofit agency and a \$10,000 donation from Yellow Pages. This led to students and volunteers working together on Saturday mornings to paint the cafeteria. Consequently, students' ideas are valued and their suggestions contribute in a positive manner toward school improvement as noted in comments such as, "It's the power of kids!" and the physical improvement of the school cafeteria.
 - The School Assessment Team (SAT), Response to Intervention (RtI) team, guidance counselor, social worker, and academic intervention teachers, work collaboratively to ensure that students receive the necessary guidance that fully supports them in attaining positive academic and personal behaviors. For example, the guidance counselor promotes the school's core values during grade-level Town Hall assembly programs. During this time, students participate in activities that reinforce monthly themes and learn about tolerance, friendship, and respect, thereby developing their social emotional skills and contributing to their academic success. Therefore, there are minimal disruptions throughout the school day as reflected in a negligible number of superintendent suspensions. The attendance committee closely monitors data for chronically absent students and follows up with phone calls, letters to families, and individual meetings with parents to stress the importance of daily attendance. Students with exemplary attendance receive monthly incentives such as certificates during assembly programs. As a result, data for chronically absent students indicates that 64% of these students are on track for improved attendance.
- School leaders consistently convey high expectations that effectively support learning so that students and faculty achieve success in meeting their goals. (3.4)

- The Core Team, comprised of the principal and grade leaders, meets on a weekly basis to review and update the expectations for each grade. This team is instrumental in communicating to colleagues, the school's high expectations specific to preparation and planning, learning environment, professionalism and classroom instruction as outlined in the Danielson Framework for Teaching tool. A wide range of professional development opportunities, including intervisitations, classroom demonstration lessons and delving into the respective domains of the Danielson framework increase the staff's understanding of the school's expectations and goals for improvement. The supervisory cabinet follows up through observations, walkthroughs, individualized conversations with teachers and by checking student work folders, notebooks and assessment data. Additionally, all teachers receive emails from school leaders and have access to a drop box for the most updated information on curriculum and professional expectations. As a result, a culture of mutual accountability related to the school's goals and expectations to accelerate student learning is evident as noted in teacher team conversations and improved practices in classroom instruction, as measured by the teacher effectiveness rubric.
- Parent meetings, workshops, the school messenger system, and individual progress reports inform parents of their children's achievement and performance in school. A Saturday Academy and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings provide opportunities for school leaders and staff to communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness and CCLS expectations. For example, parents use the Library Media Center on Saturdays, alongside their children, and with the assistance of teachers are able to enhance their understanding of the common core assessments and academic tasks by accessing ELA and math online learning activities that their children are expected to master. Such partnerships with families add to the increase of students' progress toward meeting grade benchmarks as noted in improved midline ELA and math assessment data. As a result, families understand what their children need to accomplish to be successful at their next level of learning and fully support the school's efforts in preparing their children for success. This is evident in parents' statements such as, "The school helps me understand what college and career readiness looks like for my child at this early stage." Additionally, parents praise the extra-curricular programs, including an opera residency, Music and the Brain keyboard instruction, and a chess club, which engage students in learning activities that integrate the arts and promote college and career readiness.
- The school ensures alignment of curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and offers meaningful learning experiences that promote rigor to improve student learning. (1.1)
 - The school adopted Common Core aligned English language arts (ELA) and math programs to ensure coherence of standards-based curricula and attention to the instructional shifts across grades. The content-focused ELA programs infuse science and social studies through the reading of complex texts across grades. The instructional cabinet, which includes the Literacy Coach, Literacy Specialists, and math support staff, work with teachers in unpacking the curriculum and identifying areas that require further planning and supports for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, common planning sessions

engage teachers in adjusting the pacing of instructional units, identifying appropriate scaffolds and varied visuals to provide access to lessons for all students. In the early childhood grades, teachers plan with the literacy consultant to ensure that academic tasks address appropriate depth of knowledge levels and that lessons incorporate letter recognition, word work, fluency, and academic vocabulary. Across the school, teachers plan writing units to increase the alignment of the reading program to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). As a result, students participate in rich, coherent curriculum that promotes college and career readiness skills as noted in performance-based tasks, including literary essays and argumentative writing that reflect rigor and student thinking.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the use of teaching strategies so that they strategically embed multiple entry points into academic tasks and result in adding further value into work products that reflect student ownership. (1.2)
 - Most class visits reflected the use of grouping for targeted instruction, including triads, partnerships, and small groups. Teaching strategies included conversation prompts, word walls, and protocols such as Carousel and Think-Pair-Share to support student thinking and participation. However, in some classrooms, lessons did not strategically provide multiple entry points so that English language learners and students with disabilities are sufficiently engaged in tasks that challenge and push their thinking. For example, although English language learners and students with disabilities in some classes were grouped for instruction, some students quickly completed activities and waited for teacher approval to move on, while others waited for further instruction because they did not understand the task. Additionally, in some classrooms, students who completed their tasks read independently, helped a classmate, or completed additional similar activities. Consequently, high quality supports and meaningful curricula extensions so that all students demonstrate ownership of their learning and participate in rich thinking opportunities are not fully embedded across all classrooms.
- Enhance shared assessment practices so that information on learning outcomes results in effective adjustments to instruction and clear next learning steps for students to further accelerate their learning. (2.2)
 - Teachers use Fountas and Pinnell assessments, reading and math unit tests, math checks, and performance-based rubrics aligned to the school's curricula. Students' writing artifacts on bulletin boards and in work folders include actionable feedback through "glows" which highlight students' strengths, "grows" which reflect areas for improvement, and "next steps" intended to improve learning. However, teachers' comments do not always provide students with feedback that helps them with further mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, although assessment practices include teacher and student checklists, quick checks, and the collection of data during lessons, the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding to plan targeted adjustments to instruction, and student self-assessment practices, are not fully embedded across the school. As a result, some students are not clear on what they need to do to guide their improvement, thereby hindering their

potential to maximize their progress toward meeting the expectations of the Common Core.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Suydam 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