



# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Bensonhurst School**

**Elementary School 128**

**2075 84 STREET  
BROOKLYN  
NY, 11214**

**Principal: Jessica Drzewucki**

**Dates of review: March 13-14, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Isabel DiMola**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Bensonhurst is an elementary school with 418 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 21% Hispanic, 49% White, and 29% Asian students. The student body includes 33.5% English language learners and 12% 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 95.7%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The allocation of resources and organizational decisions provide students with opportunities to make progress toward reaching instructional goals. (1.3)
  - School leaders use student outcomes and anecdotal data of teachers, and conversations with parents and students, to understand the resource needs of the school. It was observed that technology was lacking, limiting student access to programs and resources to increase their knowledge and support progress. The purchase of Smart Boards and software has increased technology available at the school, and students now have access to programs in science that provide opportunities to engage in virtual experiments. Smart Boards allow for teachers to access resources that align to the English language arts program Ready Gen and the math program Go Math. Teachers use the programs to provide access for students via differentiated entry points and offer students the ability to present their work in a variety of ways. Observational data shows that students using the technology are engaging at higher levels, impacting improving results on in-class assessments as well as performance based assessments with 44% of fourth grade students achieving mastery on the January Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). In response to student concerns that they did not have enough access to the Arts, resources are supporting Art residencies including Studio in a School and the New York Historical Society. These programs encourage interdisciplinary learning by engaging students in creating art that aligns to curriculum. For example, students researched the health benefits of various vegetables then created a superhero based upon the properties of their chosen vegetable. Students expressed their understanding of the impact of the food on the body through their writing and their superhero creation. Parents report feeling "excited that our kids are learning about food choices while having fun and doing art." Consequently, students are demonstrating higher levels of engagement during lessons, and demonstrating an ability to express their learning through multiple mediums including writing, oral presentations and art projects.
  - Careful consideration to teacher and student programming allows teachers to have multiple opportunities to meet and students to have increased access to intervention and supports that align to their learning needs. Grade level teachers have at least three common planning periods a week for inquiry, review and development of curricula, to study student work, and evaluate data to inform planning. Teacher teams deeply analyze the content materials from Ready Gen and Go Math and develop units of study that meet the requirements of the Common Core Learning Standards as well as the gaps in their students' learning. Curricula maps and units of study are standards-based and embed skill development needs that align to student data, and as teachers study the student data, they identify those in need of intervention. The school is strategic in its practice for Response to Intervention (RtI) providing identified

students with at least three periods a week of either push-in or pull-out support. Rtl teachers train in research-based programs, including Wilson for students in kindergarten through second grade, and Intervention by Design for students in third, fourth and fifth grade, to build literacy. Groupings of students receiving intervention services are fluid and students rotate out when they demonstrate sufficient progress. As a result of this practice, 48% of students receiving Rtl services have improved one level as measured by the DRA reading assessment with another 30% progressing two or more levels on the same assessment.

- School culture is collaborative and supportive of student social emotional needs resulting in a safe environment conducive to high levels of learning. (1.4)
  - During morning line-up, when students convene in the auditorium they participate in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a town-hall style meeting, and school leaders, teachers, staff members, as well as students, make presentations and discuss topics of concern. It is in this forum where the school communicates Respect for All and sets forth expectations for behavior. Topics of discussion include social-emotional learning where students discuss what it means to be caring and compassionate and how to communicate emotions in a respectful manner. Students are encouraged to be active citizens, participate in school initiatives, and demonstrate model behavior. In addition students are applauded for their achievements. They receive certificates for their participation in Ticket to Read, an on-line reading enrichment program. Individual students have the opportunity to address the student body on issues of concern, such as that the bathrooms had untoward language etched into the paint. The custodian came to speak with students about the issue and explained that because the language was scratched into the metal, there was not an easy fix and that it would take his staff a lot of time to repair. Following the custodian's remarks, students had an opportunity to share their reasons for not defacing school property. Students are taught through these meetings that they are accountable for their actions and that they must take responsibility for their environment. Students express that "We love the morning line-up. It really matters what we say and there is always someone listening to us." As a result, there is a decrease in lateness among students, parents report that their children "want to be at school to go to line-up," and there are fewer behavioral incidents than in previous years.
  - Classroom teachers have responsibility for knowing their students social- emotional needs and in tracking attendance. When there are concerns, a team of teachers, guidance counselors, service providers, and administrators, work together to ensure that each student receives the supports needed to be successful. Students that seem at-risk are referred to the team for review of anecdotal records, behavior patterns, academic progress, any changes in behavior or academics, and then it does outreach to the parent. The team develops a support plan that addresses the individual needs and works with the teacher and assigned staff to monitor progress. As a result, at-risk students are demonstrating increasing attendance and improving academic outcomes, specifically 62% of the students

identified are showing growth in math performance as measured by school created formative math assessments.

- Teachers use student data and assessments to analyze outcomes leading to clear understanding of and planning for the needs of students to meet their academic goals. (2.2)
  - Teachers use standardized test results, common assessments that include pre- and post-unit tests, as well as formative, summative, and on-demand assessments to understand student learning. A grading policy that aligns to New York State Assessment grading in English language arts and math is in effect at the school and correlates to the school's tasks and rubrics. As such, teachers are able to clearly identify for students the areas in need of improvement and provide actionable feedback that clearly articulates next steps for learning. Furthermore, within every lesson there are multiple measures of assessment to inform teachers of student understanding. Teachers monitor student conversations and ask pointed questions while recording anecdotal records of student learning. Within writing tasks students engage in peer editing and self-reflection and are able to articulate how they use rubrics and checklists to inform their work and revise when necessary. During most math lessons, teachers use on-demand assessments to group students and provide supports to help them gain access to the content. At the end of lessons teachers use exit slips and other means to gauge student understanding and plan future lessons. The data collected by teachers is meaningful, informs planning, and identifies needed interventions for individual and groups of students. As a result, students are making progress in reaching learning targets across subject areas with a majority of students demonstrating improving at least one level as measured by writing rubrics.
- School leaders support teachers' pedagogic growth by evaluating instruction using the Framework for Teaching, resulting in improved teacher practice that supports students' mastery of the standards. (4.1)
  - School leaders use student data, teacher observation, and content strands of the Common Core Learning Standards, to set school-wide instructional goals. The principal sets forth expectations that students will develop into informed, self-sustaining citizens, who will enter the world of adulthood happy and ready to face the challenges the world presents with information, integrity and passion. To that end, supervisors engage teachers in rigorous cycles of evaluation informed by and aligned to the Danielson Framework of Teaching. Teachers receive effective feedback and clear next steps toward improving their performance. Professional development opportunities align to the overall trends that observation data illuminates as well as individualized opportunities for teachers with specific needs. For example, school-wide observation data revealed a need to elevate opportunities for students to engage through questioning and discussion. As such, there is a focus on this pedagogic skill in school wide professional development, in Lunch and Learns, and in individual sessions where specific aspects of pedagogy are addressed one-on-one with teachers. A culture of learning is growing at the school and teachers articulate feeling extremely supported by

the principal, assistant principal, by network support coaches, and each other. Teachers embrace opportunities to attend off-site professional development and turn-key their learning to colleagues. There is an atmosphere of trust where teachers feel safe to be honest about their professional needs. An analysis of observation data shows an increasing competency among teachers in crafting questions that spur critical thinking and in providing students opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions that demonstrate their understanding of content and indicates the school making progress toward reaching its overarching goals.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Deepen curricula across subject areas to ensure that all students have access to rigorous units of study that provide opportunities for higher order thinking and mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards. (1.1)
  - Curricula consists of teacher created units of study that outline enduring understandings, include essential questions that address specific content, and articulate the specific Common Core Learning Standards.. There is a focus on embedding academic vocabulary as well as conversational vocabulary to meet the needs of English language learners. English language arts units and math units address the instructional shifts with opportunities for students to answer text-based questions and engage in activities that deepen math fluency and build understanding of complex concepts. The work of teachers is just beginning to include tasks that emphasize higher order skills that scaffold for all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. Currently, teachers supplement or supplant texts with those that are more level appropriate for groups of students. However, planned activities that include strategies to provide access and engage all learners are developing and are not consistently included across all content areas limiting opportunities for some students to cognitively engage in tasks that result in demonstration of skill and content mastery.
- Further enhance teacher pedagogy so that instruction is engaging for all students and provides access to challenging tasks that promote critical thinking and development of skills necessary to be college and career ready. (1.2)
  - School leaders articulate a set of beliefs for instruction that align to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The principal communicates that instruction needs to include clear communication with students so they understand what they are learning and why they are learning it. Teachers are to express how mastery of each concept and skill relates to real world situations. There is also an expectation that instruction is student centered so they have opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations and answer questions that promote critical thinking. Furthermore, students are to be given the tools and scaffolds necessary to access materials and have multiple pathways to demonstrate learning. Although instruction in some classrooms demonstrate pedagogic practices that meets expectations including questioning that promote higher order thinking and meaningful student discussions, there are gaps in teacher practice so that in

many classrooms missed opportunities were observed so that all students did not always actively engage in discussions and tasks that are appropriately challenging, nor did they demonstrate in-depth skill development to be college and career ready.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Bensonhurst	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>