

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

75K140

141 Macon Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216

Principal: Roderick Palton

Dates of review: April 8-10, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.140K is an elementary/middle school with 279 students from K through grade 8. The school population comprises 70% Black, 25% Hispanic, 2% White, 0% Asian, and 3% unspecified students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 81% of the students enrolled and girls account for 19%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 82.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides a curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), integrates the instructional shifts and makes revisions to ensure a range of learning experiences meeting the needs of their students. (1.1)
 - Last year the school adopted Reader's Journey as their English language arts (ELA) program of standardized assessment, for middle school students. This year, the school adopted Core Knowledge for their K-2 students and Expeditionary Learning for their 3-5 students. For grades K-8, the school purchased Eureka Math, which focuses on the six mathematical shifts. Teachers stated during the inquiry team meeting that, "the new math program engages our students and supports group work and classroom discussions". In addition, to support their alternate assessment students, teachers developed units of study from the District 75 Framework for Teaching. These units, each with multiple levels of performance, supplement their existing *Unique Learning Systems* with higher levels of work that connect to the CCLS. The school has partnered with Hip Hop for Life to allow targeted student groups opportunities to participate in the community. Additionally, through the Career and Technical Education (CATE) program, students participate in trips to day-care centers, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) sites, as well as engage in learning about various career and other skills they need to be successful. The instructional and curricular coherence, as well as the integration of the instructional shifts, supports group work and discussions while promoting college and career readiness for all students. For example, in a 7-8 grade class of students in alternate assessment, the class was learning about the civil war. The assignment was to locate evidence from texts they were reading and respond to questions as a group. Supports such as graphic organizers, posters with prompts for students to advance their thinking in discussions and teacher/paraprofessionals coaching into groups with probing questions to push conversation to deeper levels of thinking.
 - The school's pacing calendar and unit tasks are adjusted and refined across all sites to ensure content and instruction meets students' identified needs with remediation to increase achievement and growth. During classroom visits, tasks and texts across classrooms were rigorous and emphasized critical thinking skills. For example, in a grade 3 class for students with autism, the teacher asked, "What chores do you have at home"? After the children shared out their responses, the teacher read a book about the civil war. The teacher then posed the question, "Why do you think girls stayed home from school during this time period"? The lesson plan detailed three different group activities for the high, medium and low students to engage in appropriate hands-on-task related to creating a "book" about the civil war. Teacher teams design and review learning opportunities to strengthen the connections between vocabulary development, reading and writing, as well as content knowledge. This has led to increased student engagement and performance as evidenced in student work products.

- School leaders make deliberate organizational decisions around the use of resources, scheduling staff and collaborate with partnerships, to ensure ongoing growth for all community members. (1.3)
 - Deliberate, planned scheduling decisions ensure that teacher teams meet twice a week formally and 2-3 times per week informally during their common planning time. The school has increased per diem funds to allow staff to attend professional development that explicitly addresses the CCLS and the creation of higher order thinking questions. In addition, teachers attended workshops to learn how to design rigorous tasks across all content areas to ensure the engagement of students as evidenced in classrooms visited. According to one of the teacher teams, “This has helped us to nurture our dialogues around strengthening our teaching style”, thus engaging students in more challenging academic tasks. Time is structured for teachers to participate in inter-visitations in the use of technology and classroom management skills. To support the staff and students, administration has added another Dean to their crisis intervention team. As a result, there is an overall 10.5% decrease in level 3, 4 and 5 incidents. In addition, out of classroom referrals to the New Options Room (Dean’s office) decreased by 24% overall according to School Wide Information Systems (SWIS) data. Consequently, students remain in the classrooms participating in academic work which supports increased learning opportunities.
 - All resources are aligned to the school’s overarching goals and key priorities which aim for an average increase of two reading levels for standardized assessment students and for students in alternate assessment, a 5% increase from level 1 to level 2 based on the Student Annual Need Determination Inventory (SANDI). The school has added a Reading Intervention Specialist position and a school-based coach to assist the teachers in supporting their students in emerging foundational skills. The purchase of Great Leaps and SRA Reading Mastery supports struggling students toward closing the achievement gap. The school’s testing coordinator tracks student progress in school-wide assessment measures. As a result of this strategic focus on increasing students’ academic performance, January scores show that 70% of students in the standardized assessment program moved up one level, while 19% of students moved two reading levels according to Fountas and Pinnell assessment. In addition, spring scores show that 50% of students in the alternate assessment program moved from level 1 to level 2 in RI.1 and RI.10 and 18% moved from level 1 to level 2 in mathematics based on SANDI results.
- Through the use of a range of relevant data and ongoing assessment practices, school leaders and staff are able to analyze student learning outcomes and make informed instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - The school systematically administers curricular based pre-and-post assessments from the school’s chosen English language arts (ELA) and mathematics programs. In addition, the school looks at NYS tests in ELA and math, NYS Alternate Assessment (NYSAA), Fountas and Pinnell reading level assessment, Student Annual Need Determination Skill Inventory (SANDI) and school/teacher designed checklists and rubrics to

provide student performance data. The school adopted a school-wide grading policy that is shared with everyone including teachers, support staff, students and parents. Work products and projects, both displayed on bulletin boards and in student work portfolios, reflect teacher comments that are specific to the task presented. During the small group student meeting, students stated that when “teachers’ post *next steps* on their work it helps with their future writings”.

- There are substantial opportunities for teachers to assess what their students understand through questioning and checklists that accompany learning tasks. Through professional development, school-based coaching, as well as teacher team meetings, support is provided in analyzing student work. Teachers track student progress over time by using the school-wide *Classroom Objective Tracker* (COT). Using this document helps teachers reflect on the day’s lessons and lead to adjustments in instructional plans, such as whether re-teaching is necessary, specific graphic organizers are needed, or additional hands-on materials are warranted. This was evident in teacher lesson plans. For example, at the end of a social studies lesson, the teacher asked the students to “think about their performance during the lesson”. Students were asked to fill out their *student reflection sheet* in order to express their strengths and needs. Furthermore, the school has worked with teachers in “triangulating” their data in order to align students’ Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and student performance.
- School leaders support the development of teachers with meaningful and actionable feedback and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching in order to improve pedagogical skills across the school. (4.1)
 - Through participation in the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot (TEP) during the 2012-2013 school-year, the Danielson Framework continues to guide administrators in promoting quality teaching. The principal and assistant principals conduct frequent observations and provide teachers with focused feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework. Teachers stated, “During post- observations, administrators engage us in conversations about immediate next steps”. Student work produced during the lessons observed is referred to in written observation reports. The principal uses low inference data from the observation cycles to support teachers in developing their instructional practice through school-based support, such as professional development opportunities. Feedback to teachers includes; inter-visitations; provide students with sentence stems to start discussions; provide suitable scaffolds and challenge students to explain their thinking. Coaches are assigned to support struggling teachers based on their needs. As a result, teachers are supported in curriculum planning and developing their pedagogical skills.
 - The administrators use an on-line platform that is aligned with the Advance system for documenting teacher observations. They are able to effectively analyze the teachers’ scores on each of the Danielson’s Framework components and determine the areas of greater need school-wide, in order to provide professional development. For example, data shows that most teachers in the school (90%) were struggling with questioning techniques to support to student engagement. Professional development has been provided in this area. This approach has also

provided leaders with the ability to identify teachers with strong instructional skills. Data from 2012-2013 showed 78% of teachers were *developing* in component 3b (Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques) of the Danielson Framework and 19% were *effective*. Additionally, 52% were developing in component 3d (Using Assessment in Instruction), with 32% *effective/highly effective*. According to April's Advance Dashboard, 60% of teachers were *developing* in component 3b, 36% were *effective* and 1% was *highly effective*. For component 3d, 36% were *developing*, 50% were *effective* and 1% was *highly effective*.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance teacher questioning during the delivery of instruction in order to enrich student participation, thereby increasing opportunities to develop critical thinking skills. (1.2)
 - The school's belief that students learn best when lessons are differentiated with multiple entry points (Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and tasks that challenge learners for deeper thinking, is supported by collaborative planning during teacher team meetings. Challenging tasks are evident in student work products displayed throughout the school. During classroom visits, student directed conversations (where applicable) explaining their own ideas and using discussion to develop and expand their thinking was noted. Students are encouraged to explain the rationale for responses. Across most classrooms observed, teachers consistently stated "Tell me how you came to that answer". To ensure that students assume ownership of their own learning, the school uses the workshop model with clear mini-lessons that connect learning to previous concepts and engage students in guided and independent practice. Students work in flexible small groups, are provided with supports and scaffolds such as graphic organizers for writing lessons. Manipulatives, such as felt shapes and snap cubes, were used during a math lesson for an elementary class of students with autism (grades 3-5) demonstrating equivalent fractions. Accountable talk is frequently utilized (where applicable), in addition to hands-on activities, teacher modeling, and the use of technology to present information and provide assessment opportunities. Rationales for grouping of students were articulated by teachers verbally and in lesson plans. Differentiation was noted in various forms including leveled texts, differing rubrics and tasks. This was evidenced in a sixth/seventh grade writing lesson where students utilized differentiated narrative checklists according to student proficiency that included the standards for structure, development and language conventions. Although the school has provided professional development on Webb's Depth of Knowledge and focused on Danielson's competencies outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), in some classes the level of questioning did not always lead to high levels of student thinking. For example, some teachers used basic recall questions such as, "What did the family eat?" "Where did the family sleep?" and "What did the children wear on the farm?" which did not give students opportunities to expand on concepts, thus limiting the level of discussion. As a result, some students were not challenged to meet high levels of thinking and engagement.

- Further refine and extend the school's approach to culture building and social-emotional support such that the tone of the school is generally respectful and the school is working to address areas of need. (1.4)
 - There is a school-wide focus on building a culture of positive supports throughout the school and in all classrooms. The school is supportive of students and staff who work together to create a calm, respectful and orderly environment for learning to take place. According to the Learning Environment Survey, while students and parents felt the school was safe, the staff did not. During the 2012-2013 school year, the school initiated their Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) program: REAL (Respectful, Engaged, and Accountable Leaders). The school's behavior matrix is visible throughout the building and students "earn" points every period for their completed academic work and positive personal/social behaviors. Students use these acquired points to earn Club time weekly, as well as order from the school catalog on a monthly basis. To provide the staff with the skills and knowledge to support students emotionally, 27 staff members attended the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) workshop. The school's PBIS team monitors student behaviors and plans monthly celebrations to recognize students' academic and social successes. The team reviews monthly School Wide Information System (SWIS) and Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) reports and identifies students in need of Tier 2 or 3 interventions and help classroom teachers with identifying appropriate interventions for academic and social needs. In addition, the school relocated and redesigned their New Options Room to effectively support students in crisis. As a result of these efforts, students with the most referrals last year have shown a decrease in physically aggressive behaviors and the New Options Room is seeing fewer referrals. During the large group student meeting, students stated they felt safe in school and there was always an adult they could talk to. However, they also stated that there is no formal venue that allows students to participate in "real" decision making processes and committees resulting in limited opportunities to engage in school improvement efforts.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: K140	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