

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Andrew Jackson

Elementary School K145

**100 Noll Street
Brooklyn, NY 11206**

Principal: Lucia Perez-Medina

Dates of review: November 12-13, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Lillian Druck

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Andrew Jackson is an elementary school with 847 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 96% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 8% 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 92.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- 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 Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) promotes healthy attitudes and fosters a respectful school culture that supports students and adults. PBIS includes incentives and tangible rewards, which further motivate students to succeed and engage in their learning. Academic and personal behavior benchmarks aligned to the school's PBIS matrix incorporate "I can" statements that reinforce resiliency, respect, responsibility, self-regulation and persistence. The expectations for student behavior and academic achievement are incorporated into daily lessons, thereby establishing a common language that promotes a caring learning environment. Images of AJ the Owl, the school's mascot, are visible throughout the building along with the message, "Be wise, and make the right choice!" Students make morning announcements over the public address system, highlighting monthly character traits, providing examples of positive behaviors and reinforcing the school's motto, "Make it a great day or not, the choice is yours." Students proudly state that their daily constructive messages are valued and helpful toward increasing school-wide awareness of effective academic and behavior expectations. Consequently, the various systems in place combined with the collaborative efforts of students, staff and parents result in a productive learning community as noted in quality work displayed on bulletin boards and a negligible number of behavior-related incidents.
 - As part of the Project Wisdom curriculum, morning routines incorporate a ten minute class meeting that sets a positive tone for the day, therefore students feel welcome and secure that teachers support their needs because they know them well. Response to Intervention (RTI), PBIS, Pupil Personnel Team (PPT) meetings, and key staff members including trained academic intervention services (AIS) paraprofessionals, the peer mediator and the guidance counselor work collaboratively to ensure that each students' attendance, social-emotional skills and guidance supports are well aligned to meet their learning goals. The character education teacher serves as peer mediator and engages students in conversation and self-reflection focused on enhancing their social-emotional skills through small group sessions, role-play and hands-on activities that promote positive growth mindsets. As a result, members of the staff are attentive to students' individual needs by tactically providing academic interventions through extended day sessions, after school programs and Saturday Academy for English language learners. In addition, guidance support services and partnerships with outside agencies positively impact students' personal and academic skills as noted in a greater number of students demonstrating above average ratings as measured by the Character Education school-based rubric and a decrease in the number of incidents reported on the On-line Occurrence Reporting System (OORS).

- School leaders evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices with a clear focus on promoting professional growth and reflection, thereby impacting classroom instruction. (4.1)
 - The school served as a lab site for the Office of Teacher Effectiveness last year. This intense work with outside experts engaged supervisors in using the Danielson Framework rubric as a tool to support teacher development through clear expectations for classroom practice and feedback to improve student learning. School leaders assist new teachers using the research-based framework to specify next steps for improvement and recommend suitable development supports to meet their individual needs. All teachers receive immediate feedback following frequent cycles of supervisory visits to classrooms as noted in evaluator forms and notes regarding instructional practices. Feedback includes specific time-bound recommendations followed by supervisory conversations, emails or brief messages that inform teachers of their progress in meeting expectations related to their pedagogical skills and professional growth. As a result, feedback to teachers is positively impacting daily classroom instruction as noted in June 2013 teacher growth data reports which reflect an 11% increase in effective/highly effective ratings in competency 3B, using questioning and discussion techniques, a 13% increase in effective/highly effective ratings in competency 2B, establishing a culture for learning, and a 10% increase in effective/highly effective ratings in competency 3C, engaging students in learning.
 - Based on supervisory feedback, teachers create Grow Plans as part of professional learning portfolios that are updated periodically. Grow plans capture teachers' strengths, instructional needs, professional goals and steps to achieve their goals by projected dates, three times a year. An analysis of data gathered from the first round of supervisory visits to classrooms, helped identify the focus for professional development specific to competencies related to managing classroom procedures to strengthen rituals and routines; engaging students in learning through high-level thinking tasks; and using assessment in instruction to meet the needs of all students. In consultation with the principal, a Teacher Effectiveness Program (TEP) team plans and conducts collaborative professional development activities, coordinates inter-visitations, provides individual support for new teachers, and generates a newsletter. The newsletter includes learning opportunities, professional literature and hyperlinks from the ARIS learning community, Engage NY, and Expeditionary Learning websites. As a result, supports such as inter-visitations, co-planning with colleagues and participating in small group professional development sessions tailored to meet teachers' individual needs culminate in improved classroom practice as noted in the positive progression of feedback in observation reports and professional collaboration conversations.
- 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 and math programs to ensure coherence and attention to the instructional

shifts across grades. Common Core coordinators support grade level teams in unpacking the curriculum and identifying areas that require further planning and support for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, teacher teams used Karen Hess' Validation Tool to create performance tasks that promote rigor and critical thinking across subjects. The tool includes a checklist for quality aligned instruction and task design recommendations that provide teams with guidance to ensure that academic tasks address appropriate depth of knowledge levels and promote student engagement. In addition, the instructional program incorporates a disciplinary literacy component which engages students in content-rich projects that require access to complex materials and reinforce reading, writing and discussion grounded on text evidence in alignment with the school's goals. In the early grades, teachers design task cards to increase the alignment of writing to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Consequently, students engage in rich, coherent curriculum that promotes college and career readiness skills as noted in the wide range of projects and performance tasks displayed on bulletin boards that reflect rigor and promote student thinking.

- The principal organizes resources, partnerships and time effectively to build teacher capacity and support instructional goals in order to achieve success in meeting students' needs. (1.3)
 - The school received a two-year grant to facilitate a partnership with Studio in the School. The grant supports a full-time artist who engages kindergarten through grade 2 students in creating a wide range of projects through exposure to different art mediums. Two instructional lead teachers were hired to address the demands of the new instructional curriculum, support teacher development via coaching, and offer weekly planning sessions to impact student learning outcomes. Teacher meeting times are woven into the school schedule to provide common preparation periods, professional planning sessions, and inquiry meeting time to accelerate student learning. The schedule also includes two weekly periods that foster professional collaboration and a deeper understanding of the Danielson Framework rubric, to ensure alignment of practices across grades and subjects. Professional collaboration activities engage teacher teams in highlighting best practices, analyzing student work, and creating units of study across disciplines to support the school's writing goals. For example, a fourth grade unit of study on plants engaged students in responding to paired passages by using multiple sources and citing evidence to support their writing. The unit of study focused on reading informational texts and writing to inform an audience, thereby building students' knowledge through informational texts, engaging them in using evidence from various sources and providing opportunities to access grade level complex texts. By the end of the unit of study, 95% of grade 4 students successfully read two or more articles on the topic of photosynthesis, responded to two questions using multiple resources and cited evidence in their writing products. Student work displayed across the school reflects similar units of study and disciplinary literacy performance tasks on various topics across subjects and grades. Therefore, the effective use of organizational resources and the collaborative work of teacher teams maximize the school's efforts to meet students' needs as noted in Common Core aligned units of study, writing artifacts in student folders and projects displayed on bulletin boards.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote consistency in the use of instructional strategies so that lessons fully challenge student thinking and student work reflects high levels of engagement. (1.2)
 - Lesson plans include group activities for low, medium and high subgroups of students, reference Webb's Depth of Knowledge leveled questioning and list a range of discussion prompts, sentence starters and think, pair, share activities to provide multiple entry points to lessons. However, in some classrooms, scaffolds including graphic organizers and turn and talk prompts, do not specifically target the learning deficits of high needs students and English language learners so that their learning targets are adequately met. As a result, some students are not fully supported to participate in discussions that push their thinking, thereby limiting the range of learning opportunities that would enable them to work to their full potential.
- Further refine the school's shared assessment practices so that teachers make effective adjustments to instruction and provide clear next learning steps to students in order to accelerate their learning. (2.2)
 - Strategies such as the "fist to five" and exit slips are used in classrooms to check for understanding and to identify students who need assistance with academic tasks. In some classrooms, students are familiar with self assessment tools to review their writing products. However, the information gathered consists of checkmarks on class lists or general comments related to writing mechanics that do not provide specificity regarding students' academic deficits or next learning steps. Therefore, some students, particularly students with disabilities and English language learners, are not clear on what they need to do differently to strengthen their skills so that they achieve mastery across all subjects. This limits teachers' ability to make strategic adjustments to lessons in order to address the learning needs of individuals and subgroups of students in a more targeted manner, which hinders opportunities to further accelerate student learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Andrew Jackson	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