



**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 Nicolas Herkimer School

23K155

**1355 Herkimer Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Nelly Cortes

Dates of review: December 10-11, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Mauricière de Govia

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Nicolas Herkimer School is a pre K-8 school with 527 students from Pre K through grade 8. The school population comprises 58% Black, 38% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school strategically adopted Department of Education selected curricula to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integration of the shifts, leading to all students having access to engaging, high level tasks. (1.1)
 - The school adopted *Ready Gen* for ELA in grades K-2, *Expeditionary Learning* for ELA in grades 3-8, *Go Math* for math in grades K-5, and *Connected Mathematics Project 3 (CMP3)* for math in grades 6-8. The curriculum was chosen by school administration and faculty who felt that the combination of *Ready Gen* and *Expeditionary Learning* for ELA was necessary as the blend of the two curriculums provided students with opportunities for higher order thinking, questioning, and discussion. Furthermore it possessed “rigor” as defined by the Depth of Knowledge wheel and allowed for differentiated engagement that encouraged students to explore the curriculum via multiple entry points for all learners; including special education students and English language learners (ELLs). Despite the challenge of an incomplete curriculum materials delivery, the school managed with the support of the Children First Network to copy and print text, worksheets, and other curricula supports for students and teachers. Curricula plans showed evidence of scaffolded instruction for learning that developed students’ background knowledge of content or of the literature. Furthermore, it considered the implementation of the instructional shifts; particularly infusing informational text and vocabulary development into the units of study. Units of study also considered differentiated graphic organizers, a variety of sentence starters, discussion techniques, and modifications for students with disabilities increasing access to the curriculum via multiple entry points. In grades K-3, there are additional supplemental materials and curricula for reading, phonics development and writing that the teachers incorporated into the units of study using *Reading First*, *Saddler Phonics*, and *Write Source*. Other supplements to the curricula include a design of an early bird program for English Language Learners that was developed to improve the oral reading skills, sight word recognition, and number sense of newly arrived English Language Learners. There is also a curriculum that is heavily designed around the use of graphic organizers and the use of informational text for the English as a second language pull-out program. As a result of this curricula selection and design, all students; including English Language Learners and special education students have access to Common Core aligned curricula that infuses the instructional shifts to engage students in high level performance tasks.
- Teachers’ instructional practices across classrooms provide learners with multiple entry points into the curricula so that all students can demonstrate high levels of thinking, discussions, and produce meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - The principal stated that students learn best via “...strong engagement practices that provide multiple entry points for the students present... Engagement means that teachers ask higher-level questions that lead students into discussions and more questions... Technology is also evident in the classroom where engagement is effective as it provides another mode of access for learning.” The principal sentiment was evident in the

classroom as students were in differentiated groups with differentiated graphic organizers and tasks to engage in lessons. In a first grade classroom, the learning objective was: To understand that informational text is structured around a main topic and key details. The teacher set the expectation to the students that, "I want you to ask questions and talk to each other." She then shared the title of a video, *If You Are a Jackrabbit*, with the students and asked them questions such as "What's the author's topic?" and "What do we expect the author to talk about?" Students partnered to respond to the questions and shared their ideas. The video was then connected to text and the students read through the text with the support of differentiated graphic organizers. In a 2nd grade classroom, students were engaged in a discussion comparing (Charlotte's Web's) Wilbur to the Snow Shoe Hare. The students were using their Venn Diagrams to support their discussion. In an 8th grade math class, students were engaged in a discussion about translations based on guiding questions posed by the teacher such as "How many angles did we need to prove the triangles were similar?" "Is there anything else we learned that is necessary to put these 2 triangles together?" "Why should we have congruent angles?" The conversation led students to develop a rule about two triangles having one pair of corresponding angles. As a result of these pedagogical practices, all learners; including ELLs and special education students are provided with multiple entry points into the curriculum that fosters the demonstration of higher order questioning, discussion, and meaningful student work products.

- The school utilizes resources and makes organizational decisions to address student needs and provide interventions to meet the school's instructional goals and increase student achievement. (1.3)
 - The principal voiced that resources are used to support the needs of students, teachers, and school-wide goals. A review of the schedule and budget revealed that the school leader has employed effective strategies for increasing instructional time and extending the use of resources to maximize teaching and learning at the school. Students' schedules are developed based on students' academic and behavioral needs as well as teacher capacity to maximize instruction and impact student achievement. To accomplish this practice, the principal considers student data, conversations with teacher and parents, and the professional development needs of teachers. In conjunction with the instructional goal of enhancing teacher practice, teacher teams are scheduled to meet 1-2 times a week for planning and curriculum development. To support the work of teacher teams, there is money set aside for Common Core and Danielson Professional Development for teacher development. During a teacher team meeting, staff was seen assessing the rigor of an assignment as it aligned to the Danielson Framework regarding student engagement. There are also funds that support parent workshops that teach about the Common Core Learning Standards and new curriculum. To meet the instructional goal of supporting struggling learners, the Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teacher provides intervention services across the school. This assists with the Response to Intervention Program (RTI) and the mandated SETSS services listed on students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Her schedule was developed based on student performance data that indicated the need for tiered groups as prescribed by the RTI model. In addition to these services, students are scheduled for extended day and afterschool classes based on academic needs in English language arts, math, and ESL. To support instructional delivery in classrooms, Smart boards were

purchased through grants for all the classrooms and the teachers have employed their use to enhance the instructional core in the classrooms. As a result of these resource management practices, staff and students' time is structured so that they meet consistently throughout the week. Furthermore, there is direct correlation between the school-wide goals and how resources are utilized yielding positive outcomes for student performance and work products such as essays and performance on ELA summative assessments.

- The administration utilizes the Danielson Framework to consistently provide teachers with effective feedback that influences the professional development to further elevate school-wide instructional practices. (4.1)
 - The Danielson Framework has been the anchoring assessment of teacher practice at the school. Every week the cabinet sets the expectations of how many observations are going to get done and asks the essential question, "What are we learning about teacher practice from observations?" The principal and the cabinet's review of observation data revealed patterns and trends of teacher performance that led to the school leaders' narrow focus on developing higher order thinking questioning and discussion techniques that improve student engagement opportunities in the classroom. Written feedback to teachers stated, "Use talk prompts that foster student conversations based on the text. Suggested prompts are 'I agree with...because...' or 'In the text it says...that means...'" Other feedback included, "Use a list of synonyms to enhance students' vocabulary in conversations." This was seen as a chart in classrooms that listed words and their synonyms for students to refer to during discussions. The Advance System is used to track and submit feedback to teachers on their performance during observations. Feedback to teachers consisted of comments on improving questioning strategies and discussion techniques. Furthermore, it detailed next steps, which consisted of instructional professional development plans that paired teachers in good standing with teachers in need of assistance. It also listed specific workshops to attend, linked teacher needs to videos on ARIS, and cited detailed recommendations in a Teacher Improvement Plan (TIP) if teachers were continuously receiving a rating of "ineffective". As a result of these practices, the administration uses the Danielson Framework to provide teachers with effective feedback that is connected to professional development opportunities that are directly correlated to supporting and enhancing school-wide practices.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher assessment practices to consistently reflect meaningful feedback and ongoing checks for understanding during lesson delivery so that all students demonstrate increased mastery and self-reflection. (2.2)
 - The school employs multiple school-wide assessments such as DIBELS and Common Core aligned baselines for English language arts and math. The principal voiced that grade level and inquiry teams use the results of these assessments to discuss students and planning for teaching and learning. In addition, school leaders and the literacy coach review assessment data and share with teachers their students' progress on a regular basis. These reports tracked student progress and informed teachers of their students who were not meeting their benchmarks, who were in need of intense intervention services, and who was in good standing academically/meeting the standard.

The principal shared that she expects assessment to be an inherent part of planning and lesson design via the use rubrics, exit slips, and reflection sheets at the end of tasks or units of study. While there was evidence of the impact of school-wide assessments being employed in the classrooms via student groupings and differentiated graphic organizers, there was limited evidence of meaningful feedback and ongoing checks for understanding during the delivery of lessons that would provide students with a roadmap towards mastery. Students shared that their teachers told them of their success on tasks and some students referred to using rubrics to gauge their performance. However, in the majority of classrooms there was more teacher assessment of successful task completion vs. students being given an opportunity to assess their own performance against an assessment tool. As a result of this assessment practice, student mastery is limited by inconsistent meaningful feedback and ongoing checks for understanding that foster opportunities for self-reflection on performance tasks.

- Develop structures and systems that communicate high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness in partnership with families to support student progress towards those expectations. (3.4)
 - The school leader communicated that high expectations are evident in the Common Core aligned curriculum choices made by the faculty. Furthermore, the principal shared that there is mutual respect, effective communication, and a strong commitment to students' learning that exist in the school. The principal felt that these attributes connect administration, teachers, parents, and students as a team that fosters a culture of high expectations for teaching and learning at the school. Parental support and engagement is active in the school. There are family workshops about Common Core, monthly Parent Teacher Association meetings, and parent volunteers in the school who voiced that they would definitely recommend this school to other families. While these opportunities are significant, they do not establish consistent connections between the curricula, classroom practices, and communication to families about student preparation for college and careers. The latter was demonstrated in conversations with parents who were unfamiliar with reflection sheets used in classrooms to assess students' sentiment about their performance on units or learned skills. Furthermore, parents couldn't describe concretely how the school prepared students for college and careers. Parents were in favor of the administration and school- "It's a good school, the teachers and the principal care about the kids...they are organized...they help us understand the curriculum...my daughter has been doing better in this school," but they lacked information about navigating and accomplishing the high expectations that are required to succeed and achieve with Common Core. As a result of this lack of understanding, it is evident that school leaders and staff are in the primary stages of developing expectations that are connected to a path of college and career readiness via systems that are evident and connected through the curriculum, classroom practice and communication streams that impact student progress and establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Nicolas Herkimer 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