



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**St. Clair McKelway School**

**23K178**

**2163 Dean Street  
Brooklyn, New York 11233**

**Principal: Dr. Joseph Henry**

**Dates of review: December 3 - 4, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Mauriciere de Govia**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

23K178 is a Pre-K-8 school with 460 students from Pre K through grade 8. The school population comprises 79% Black, 17% Hispanic, 2% White, and .4% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty strategically adopted Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula and made strategic decisions to emphasize key standards so that all students are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
  - The school's administration, teachers, and School Leadership Team (SLT) collaborated in the selection of the CCLS aligned curriculum by assessing the needs of students, attending curriculum fairs, and the teachers dissecting sample curriculum materials to determine the benefits and challenges of the programs for their students. Their process led to the adoption of Ready Gen for English language arts in grades K-5, Codex for English language in grades 6-8, Go Math for grades K-5, and Connected Mathematics Project 3 (CMP3) for grades 6-8. The school has effectively begun applying greater focus to “*unpacking the curriculum*” and “*unpacking the tasks*”. Grade level curriculum maps revealed data informed decisions aligned to the use of unit assessments, curricular revisions based on student performance on tasks, and early considerations of horizontal and vertical alignment of instruction across and throughout the grades. Teachers pay attention to Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) to guide the differentiation of tasks for students with disabilities. The latter was evident in lesson plans where teachers had sections dedicated to the differentiation of student groups and tasks based on assessed levels. As a result of these practices, all students; including English language learners and special education students had access to curricula and academic tasks that were refined using data or student work to cognitively engage students.
- The school creates a culture of trust and respect where supports and services address students' social-emotional needs to promote the development of effective academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
  - The school has successfully developed systems that address the social-emotional needs of students. School-wide, it is evident that all stakeholders employ the use of the *Star Behavioral Matrix*. This guide describes the expected behaviors of students in various locations in the school. Furthermore, it teaches students through a series of activities on attendance and punctuality, school uniform, honor roll, and leadership skills. Upon meeting expectations, students receive raffles, pizza parties, commendation cards, and other rewards. As a result of the *Star Behavioral Matrix*, teachers share strategies for working with students at team meetings considering the development of the whole child; a noted school-wide goal by the principal. It also helps build relationships between teachers and students, fostering a structure that gives students an adult, or adults, they can connect with. Students expressed clarity of purpose, excitement, and interest when discussing the *Star* program. In addition, teachers voiced how helpful it is to have a consistent student management system across classrooms to work with students. The school also has the *Respect for All* program that provides professional development for teachers on seizing peer mediation opportunities in classrooms and creating a “*bully free zone*” school. The latter is evident

through a student-based group called *Bully Busters* who are a group of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who address bullying complaints through peer mediation and interventions. The guidance counselor spearheads this work and also incorporates the curriculum in to small “*pull-out*” counseling groups. Students voiced that these initiatives have created a healthier school climate for learning. Student behavior is positive in the classrooms, and respect between students and the faculty is evident in the way that school members and students interact with each other. The school’s effort to ensure a positive and effective school culture has resulted in a calm tone that is conducive to safety and respect in the hallways, cafeteria, and during transitions leading to an environment that where student voice is welcomed and valued.

- Teachers are engaged in professional collaborations to develop curriculum, analyze student work, and plan instruction resulting in an increase their instructional capacity. (4.2)
  - The collaborative culture of the school is further supported by a schedule that allows for teacher common planning time. Administrators, teachers, and service providers are the instructional cabinet who meets on a weekly basis to discuss student work, their performance on assessments, curriculum, instruction, and the evolving needs of the school community. This team’s key responsibility is to monitor instructional trends in the school and to stay connected to grade teams, their agendas, discussions, and needs. During the instructional cabinet meeting the members were observed reviewing math data and how it connected to the math standards using a worksheet to help them brainstorm about what the results mean for math instruction and the students school-wide. The instructional cabinet along with members of the School Leadership Team and the network created a *Planning Organizer*, which is a document that aligns Department of Education (DOE) initiatives to the instructional life of students and teachers at the school. This document considers professional development, scheduling, a theory of action for learning, the role of teams, and the role of service providers in the promotion of strategic instructional decisions in the school. In grade teams, teachers were seen reviewing student work via a set protocol that encouraged peer-to-peer feedback. In this meeting, the teachers engaged each other in thinking about their own practice and its impact on the student work that was being reviewed. Teachers also supported one another by agreeing to incorporate some of the suggestions discussed into their own respective instruction. Teachers said that there has been a “positive shift” in the culture of teaching at the school as teachers are now fully engaged in instructional collaboration that fosters the giving and “receiving of feedback to each other”. During these visits, teachers deliver warm and cool feedback and present suggestions for next steps. Furthermore, as evidenced in the grade team meeting, teachers share research, anecdotes, and data to support their colleagues in the development of a rigorous CCLS aligned units of study. These practices create opportunities for the majority of teachers to actively participate on teams to discuss instruction, student development, and promote the achievement of school goals resulting in increased opportunities to strengthen the capacity of teachers.

## What the school needs to improve

- Develop teacher practices so that they consistently provide scaffolds into the curricula to ensure that all learners are engaged in challenging tasks and high levels of thinking and discussions. (1.2)
  - The pedagogical practices exhibited throughout the classrooms inconsistently provided scaffolds into curriculum, and did not provide opportunities for students to engage in challenging tasks or discussions. In a Kindergarten classroom, students were observed turning and talking to their partners about a shared text. However, in other classrooms, teachers dominated discussions, engaged students in choral reading, and asked rapid-fire questions that yielded one-word responses. Furthermore, students were not provided with supports that would assist them in grasping challenging concepts and skills. This created a disconnect between the school's priority to align teaching practice to the Common Core Learning Standards and utilizing high order thinking questions to help deepen students thinking and develop meaning as they learn. In a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, a teacher provided a challenging text to the students but failed to model thinking or strategies that would assist students in engaging with the text. As a result of these teaching practices, many students observed were passive learners who asked little to no questions and therefore, demonstrated low levels of engagement.
- Strengthen teacher assessment practices to include meaningful feedback and varied use of ongoing checks for understanding during lesson delivery so that all students demonstrate increased mastery. (2.2)
  - The school employs multiple school-wide assessments such as inventories, Fountas and Pinnell, and CCLS aligned baselines for ELA 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, teachers submit monthly assessment reports to the administration about the progress of students on concepts being taught in the classroom. These reports provide an analysis of individual students' performance along with a "prescription" for intervention. While there was evidence of school-wide assessment practices, 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. Teachers are provided with a "Conference Sheet" template. However, no teachers were observed using the tool or conferring with students. Most of the teaching was whole class instruction conducted from the front of the room. Furthermore, across classrooms and bulletin boards, teacher feedback on student work was limited and inconsistently based on a rubric. When asked, students recalled little to no use of rubrics and one-to-one or small group conferences with teachers where feedback was given to them about their performance or how to improve their skills via the use of a rubric or other evaluation tool. These assessment practices miss opportunities for students to achieve mastery as checks for understanding are inconsistent and feedback lacks rigor or a set of measured standards that track success on tasks.

- Develop structures and processes to evaluate, monitor and adjust instructional curricular and pedagogical practices with particular attention to the expectations of the CCLS to meet both students' and teachers' learning needs. (5.1)
  - The administration has no way of capturing and comparing observational data that tracks the consistency with which school-wide instructional expectations are being implemented. This was evident when observing the kindergarten classroom, the teacher frontloaded the vocabulary, asked supporting questions, and brainstormed about the title of the book with the students prior to reading the text. However, in the other classrooms, the instructional shifts were not evident in the lessons, the teachers didn't scaffold instruction, and they did not check for student understanding. The principal noted that he and the AP tend to focus their feedback on the quality of instruction taking place, but have yet to systematically track fidelity to their expectations across classrooms. The administration stressed the importance of "Student Progress Reports" as a measure of student performance that is delivered to parents in between marking periods. Parents and students expressed various knowledge of the existence of the reports, some received one and others did not. There was also a debate among the students about the usage of rubrics and their purpose in instruction. Most students were unfamiliar with rubrics and relied on their teacher telling them they got the answer "right". This was evident in the classrooms where teachers' checks for student understanding was limited and reduced to one-word responses fostering delayed and passive interactions. This demonstrated that the administration does not have an effective system for ensuring coherence in the distribution of "Student Progress Reports" and the use of rubrics as an evaluative structure. Teachers do participate in professional development and they do receive feedback from administrators about their teaching practice. Teacher feedback was observed via the Advance system. The feedback contained observation statements such as, "More higher-order thinking questions are needed." However, the feedback lacked alignment between teacher performance, professional development, and student performance. As a result of these practices, little attention has been given to developing systems that create strategic coherence between teacher professional development, classroom practice, and student assessment that influences and guides instruction; improving learning for all students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name:	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>					
<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?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
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?		<b>X</b>					
<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?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?		<b>X</b>					
<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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
<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>