



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Walter Kassenbrock Elementary School

K185

**8601 Ridge Blvd
Brooklyn
NY 11209**

Principal: Kenneth Llinas

Dates of review: December 2- 3, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Walter Kassenbrock is an elementary school with 789 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises, 14% Hispanic, 78% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 12% 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 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has adopted Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula across all grades and content areas to ensure cognitive engagement, and promote college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - The school has piloted a rigorous Lead 21 literacy program aligned to CCLS in the lower grades since 2011, and this year has made the purposeful decision to adopt it K-5 in order to meet all students' needs. Based on research, expertise of teachers, and learner needs, a decision was made to adopt My Math, a new school wide math program in grades K-5 in order to close the achievement gap and promote college and career readiness. Additionally, building on their benchmark testing program, the new literacy and math curriculum has been supplemented by Ready New York for English language arts (ELA), and Ready New York for math. Additionally, this past spring with the introduction of CCLS testing, school leaders and key staff engaged in a process to establish a common set of expectations for how curriculum should be adapted to provide access for all learners, and reflect the integration of the CCLS and instructional shifts in alignment with Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). Across classrooms, students are engaged in learning tasks using on-demand, and show your work strategies. As a result, students are beginning to show fluency, application and conceptual understanding in math, as evident in a fifth grade math class. Moreover, most students are experiencing CCLS aligned curricula as evident in the first grade social studies integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, and a fourth grade ELA class where students were able to cite text-based evidence to support their verbal and written work.
 - School leaders and faculty continuously refine instruction and learning tasks using student work and data to ensure all students have access. In response to results from the performance assessment in ELA, and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) baseline, grade level teams are using these results to determine students' strengths, challenges and implications for instruction, as evident during the fourth grade student progress team meeting. Consequently, teachers adjust strategies and instructional plans for a variety of learners, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). Furthermore, evidence of structures to support student work related behaviors have prompted the school to prioritize the introduction of 'on demand' training and 'show your work' strategies that were missing. As a result, the introduction of vertical learning in all upper grade classrooms, includes a strategy where one student shows their work at an easel, while another student takes notes related to the lesson, as observed in a fifth grade math class. This practice has resulted in strong visual support for students as they work through a lesson, as well as the teacher's immediate access to students' current skill levels which leads to increased student engagement for ELLs and SWDs as they show their work and explain their thinking.

- The principal makes key decisions around the budget, assignments and scheduling that are well aligned to the school's instructional goals to increase learning for all students. (1.3)
 - The principal's budget coupled with staff input results in the strategic use of resources that are well aligned to the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), and school-wide instructional goals. ELA/Math CCLS specialists in grades K-2, and 3-5 and a Lead 21/ My math Tech support specialist for grades K-5, collaborate and coach individual teachers and teacher teams, as well as support students in small group instruction in ELA, and math, sharing responsibility for targeted groups of students. The principal and staff made a decision to adopt My Math, a new math program K-5, Lead 21 a new literacy program for grades 3-5, and continue with Lead 21 in grades K-2, all of which are aligned to the CCLS. Moreover, other initiatives such as technology integration, support students as evidenced in the use of SMART Boards, laptops and ELMO document readers in all classrooms. Furthermore, strategic partnerships that promote student engagement, as well as the nurturing of students' interests are scheduled strategically to complement other content area offerings throughout the school year. Grade specific activities such as; music, art, Chess in the Schools, Dancing Classrooms, and theater drama are aligned to curricula. As a result, students benefit from these enrichment activities that promote the school's goals and meet students' learning needs.
 - Teacher assignments and student groupings are strategic as seen in the ICT classes, CCLS support in ELA and math, and multiple configurations of teacher teams. Consequently, students receive instruction in a rich learning environment and benefit from challenging tasks in order to achieve at a higher level. Staff is grouped in a variety of collaborative teams and hold substantial meetings two to three times per week to look at student work, modify instruction to shift teacher practice, address all special education concerns related to existing individualized education plans (IEPs) and refine performance tasks. As a result of these strategic decisions, time on task is optimized for the entire school community, which has resulted in teachers presenting lessons to students that yield meaningful work products that reflect high levels of student thinking as evidenced in the upper grades. Students were observed working at an easel, board, or SMART Board in groups of two or three showing examples of vertical displays of their work as the lesson progresses. One student was observed recording critical language and or concerns inherent in the lesson, while the other student recorded his work to be displayed at various points in the lesson. These practices have resulted in greater opportunities for students to self-assess and to be more accountable for the outcome of the lesson.
- The school has created a culture that values the social and emotional needs of the entire community with targeted supports that promote academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - The school community takes great pride in their positive school culture, as evidenced by a profound sense of structure, trust, respect and warmth that permeates the environment. The students recite the school's motto every day after the pledge, "We will learn to be good students, good friends and good people". Positive behaviors, including demonstration of

specific character traits such as respect, excellence, achievement, perfect attendance and responsibility allow students the opportunity to be regularly recognized with awards and certificates. Initiatives such as; “Caught Being Good”, forms the foundation of the school’s philosophy; students know that being good is their responsibility, and they live up to it, especially when they are on their own. This focused initiative has led to the reduction of incidents in OORS, and notable positive behaviors of targeted students. Additionally, student government meets regularly with the principal and provides input in activities that best meet their needs. For example, the student government wanted to participate in the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Toys for Tots, Litter Patrol, and Go Green. As a result of their input, students now fully participate in these initiatives. This demonstrates active participation in shaping school-wide decisions, thereby fostering opportunities for students to be meaningfully involved in decision-making processes that lead to school improvement promoting citizenship and care for others.

- Parents, staff and students unanimously agree that the school fosters a safe climate where students’ social emotional academic and personal behaviors are addressed. The school’s inclusive culture enables every student to be well known by a staff member who helps support their academic and social growth, as well as personalized attendance supports that underpin the 96.2 % attendance rate year to date. On a regular basis, students are encouraged to have a positive mindset and remain committed to their long term goals. The school started a new initiative this year to cultivate personal behaviors such as persistence that lead to success that was connected to a real world topic. Students worked on their literal and analytical skills as they answered questions about Diana Nyad swim from Cuba to Florida. Each day, a question such as; “How is Diana Nyad an inspiration to others?”, “If Diana Nyad were to visit the school, what would be the one question you would ask her?” Students worked in partnerships to answer those questions, and their work is posted on the “Starting Line Finish Line” bulletin board under the heading “Where Heroes Arrive”. This initiative has resulted in Diana Nyad visiting the school on December 12th. Consequently, students and staff agree that this work has resulted in the adoption of effective academic behaviors preparing students for college and careers.
- Through the use of a wide range of assessments, staff has an informed understanding of student performance to positively impact student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teachers use student work, conference notes, running records, benchmark assessments, and performance tasks in ELA and math, aligned to (CCLS) in order to gauge students’ strengths, needs, and effectiveness of the taught curricula. In one first grade ICT class during independent reading, students were able to complete a four square writing graphic organizer to discuss a good opening and closing sentence for their shared writing. Additionally, in a fourth grade class, students read realistic fiction and fantasy stories in their leveled readers, then engage in a range of collaborative discussions, building on each other’s ideas, and sharing specific character traits of the main character. As such, students are becoming cognizant of the connections between the tasks and the expectations espoused by the CCLS. Furthermore, all

teachers utilize rubrics and align written feedback on students' work with the specific rubric being utilized to note students' strengths and needs. Consequently, teachers have an understanding of students' assessment results relative to selected standards. (a)

- Assessment results, including student work products, are reviewed by grade level teams as evidenced during the 4th grade team meeting. Teacher teams administer common assessments in literacy and math and use the results to measure students' progress toward specific goals in order to evaluate and revise units of study and individual lessons. As a result, teachers use common measurements to inform decisions and implement strategies to support student progress in identified skills.
- School leaders provide consistent, actionable feedback to teachers through frequent cycles of classroom observation, resulting in their professional growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders firmly support the development of teacher practice through the strategic use of frequent cycles of classroom observations and ongoing analysis of student work, in order to promote teachers' instructional capacity. There is an anticipated understanding that each teacher can expect an estimated minimum of five to six written reports aligned with the Danielson framework for Teaching throughout the year. Several templates have been developed and utilized to validate each teacher's strengths and promote clear next steps based on the Danielson competencies of designing coherent instruction, using assessments in instruction, questioning and discussion techniques, and engaging students in learning. In addition, school leaders utilize the observation process to provide feedback to teachers aligned to their professional goals, resulting in increased instructional capacity and professional growth, particularly in competency 3c, engaging students in learning, as evidenced by class visits as well as teacher observation reports.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen instructional practices based on data so that lesson planning reflects purposeful groupings to provide appropriate challenge aligned to students' achievement levels. (1.2)
 - The school emphasizes the importance of high level questioning and discussion across classrooms with professional development support from literacy and math specialists, the administration, and the network. All curricula include essential questions, learning targets, and on-demand learning tasks that support student access and push them to show their thinking, as well as take ownership of learning. Most grade 3-5 classrooms incorporate on-demand learning into lessons so that students are beginning to demonstrate higher levels of thinking and participation as evidenced in two fifth grade math classrooms. Students work in groups to solve real world problems, record critical language or concerns inherent in the lesson and display their work at various points during the lesson. However, at times, teachers do not always use formative data to make assignments or provide multiple entry points for the needs of individuals or small group of students. As a result, meaningful work products that demonstrate activities that stretch the thinking of all learners including

ELLs, SWDs, and those performing at the highest level are not yet evident school wide.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Walter Kassenbrock Elementary 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