



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

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

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Gil Hodges**

**K193**

**2515 Avenue L  
Brooklyn  
NY 11210**

**Principal: Tami Flynn**

**Dates of review: March 4-5, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Gil Hodges is an elementary school with 883 students from pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 51% Black, 14% Hispanic, 16% White, 14% Asian, 2% multi-racial, and 3% other students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 14% 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 94.4%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is well developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school strategically aligns content standards to the curriculum and incorporates the instructional shifts with opportunities for engaging complex tasks, resulting in rigorous, accessible and coherent curricula across classrooms. (1.1)
  - The school uses *Math in Focus* as their core math program, which is grounded in curriculum and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). In English language arts (ELA), they utilize multiple resources, such as units of study that incorporate the common core bundles and performance tasks in kindergarten through grade 2 and *Expeditionary Learning* in grades 3-5. All grades emphasize deep understanding of important concepts and the development of essential skills through *close reading*, an overarching goal that is pervasive across the school, resulting in coherence across grades and subject areas that position students on a path for post secondary readiness. The school also ensures a deliberate focus on academic vocabulary, or Tier 2 words, such as *resistance* and *preservation*, and content vocabulary, or Tier 3 words, such as *longhouse* and *confederacy*, embedded in their units of study, as well as an emphasis on fluency and reading comprehension. Through a progression of interdisciplinary research tasks and rigorous habits, such as questioning and problem posing that build on students' exposure to a vast array of nonfiction texts, students demonstrate their thinking by comparing and synthesizing ideas and engaging in productive literary analyses across multiple texts. They then present their findings in a variety of modes in informal and formal contexts appropriate to the grade level, such as through oral presentations, argumentative or explanatory essays. As a result of students' access to a wide range of complex texts and high level vocabulary, they have enhanced proficiency in writing and speaking, as evidenced by the frequent use of grade appropriate lexis, high-level discourse, and widespread engagement of all students in textual analysis, critical thinking of complex texts, and extensive high quality writing products across the school and embedded across all curriculum to support all students.
- Scaffolded teaching strategies with entry points that push critical thinking, engage all students in collaborative discussions, resulting in high levels of achievement in student work products. (1.2)
  - Across all classrooms and content areas, teachers provide for multiple ways to engage students through individual choices, collaborative work tasks, setting of personal goals, and high expectations. Through the implementation of strategic questioning, as well as the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, teachers respond to the variability of all learners, provide rich supports for learning across all classrooms, and design curricula that reduces barriers to the curriculum to enable all students to gain knowledge, skills, and an enthusiasm for learning. In a fifth grade math class, for example, the teacher provided explicit, systematic instruction, including various models of problem solving, opportunities to think aloud, turn and talk, engage in guided practice, and give their peers corrective feedback in response to a lesson on expressing fractions as decimals. During the guided practice segment of her lesson, students used their white boards to indicate

their level of understanding and those who needed additional support were provided with extra reteaching strategies. Similarly, in a fourth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teaching class, the students were continuing their study of focusing on the Iroquois, identifying similarities and differences between life of the modern Iroquois people and those who lived in the 1900's. Among the four data-based groups of students, varied levels of Depths of Knowledge (DOK) questions were posed by the teachers and paraprofessionals leading the distinct groups. Students were encouraged to turn and talk to their partners, ask questions of the adults and one another. They wrote their responses to the questions on "sticky" notes and placed them on appropriate sections of the T-chart, which they created collaboratively. In other groups, brimmed with student choice, some students resolved to read alone, whereas others chose to read with their partner. During the concluding segment of the lesson, the students were encouraged to respond to critical thinking questions of gradient difficulty with varied scaffolds. For example, one group of students wrote independently while another group was provided a template with multiple lines on which to record their responses to six questions, including, "What do you think it means to 'live a life in harmony with nature?'" A third group had a timeline recording form on which they responded to four questions such as, "During which years on the timeline do you think life was most peaceful for the Iroquois people?" The fourth group was encouraged to use at least two specific details from other parts of the text to explain their opinion. This variety of teaching strategies served to meet students at their respective points of entry. At the conclusion of the lesson, the students used the school's adapted version of the "3-2-1" protocol on which students reflected upon three new things they learned, identified two new vocabulary words, and posed one question they still had. In an accelerated fourth grade class, the teacher provided three options in response to how the American Revolution paved the future of the United States. Students had the option of writing a paragraph that explained the British plan to capture the New York colony, creating a poster protesting the stamp Act, or writing an essay that explains why they are either Patriots or Loyalists. As a result of teachers' flexible and accessible strategies, they consistently secure the opportunity for all students, including English language learners (ELLs), students with Individualized Plans (IEPs), and advanced learners to have access to scaffolds and extensions that result in rich, deep discussions with their peers, high levels of thinking, distinguished work products, and student ownership in lessons.

- The school's common assessment practices and data-driven decision-making, well aligned to curricula and standards, result in effective adjustments to curricula, instruction and pacing to meets students learning needs. (2.2)
  - Teachers across the school use grade-wide common assessment data from unit tests and writing samples to track growth in skills across their grades and make instructional and curricular decisions to ensure that all students, including ELLs and students with IEPs, achieve mastery toward goals, respond to instruction, and they are intentional about which research-based instructional strategies to use in their classrooms. Activities such as think-pair-share, turn and talk, using exit slips, and providing frequent junctures for students to engage in peer and self-assessment enable teachers to gain an understanding of student progress and make necessary instructional adjustments. In a kindergarten ICT class, students had a writing checklist taped to their desks with questions, such as "Did I stretch my words? Did I

use punctuation marks? Does my writing make sense?” These questions, accompanied by pictorial representations, allow students to engage in self-assessment of their work and support teachers’ ability to move their young learners to greater independence. Similarly, in a fifth grade math class, the teacher conducted ongoing assessment of learning and engaged the students in self-assessment strategies, using the “fist to five” protocol for students to gauge their grasp of the lesson by holding up the appropriate number of fingers to indicate whether they completely understand, mostly understand, understand pretty well, could use more practice, need help, or do not understand at all. Additionally, there is abundant evidence on classroom and hallway bulletin boards of students’ appraisals of their peers’ written work, as well as teachers’ comments. As a result of these keen practices, teachers have become skilled formative assessors who track the achievement for all of their students, with particular attention to their individual group’s lowest third, as evidenced by their ability to identify data sources used, target skills and indicate their schematics for meeting the needs of their diverse learners. Consequently, students across all grades are advancing along the trajectory of proficiency, as shown by the steady progress made in reading and math, as well as reflected in the grade of “A” earned on the school’s 2012-2013 Progress Report. Students also demonstrate noteworthy progress on the school’s most recent Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), which revealed that 94% and 89% of students made progress in the k-2 and 3-5 grade bands, respectively. According to the most recent formative assessment data, 94% and 81% of the school’s ELL subgroup have made progress in the k-2 and 3-5 grade bands, correspondingly. Hence, teachers’ productive use of ongoing formative assessment has led to increased student achievement along the learning trajectory.

- School leaders strategically and effectively prioritize organizational, fiscal, and personnel resources and orchestrate scheduling to further the instructional goals of the school, which are astutely aligned to the school’s data-defined needs. (1.3)
  - School leaders coordinate scheduling to enable teacher teams to meet weekly to gather and analyze academic tasks and student work, share and revise plans, determine necessary adjustments to curricula and instruction, and deepen their understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching through the use of focused agendas and protocols. Every grade has a minimum of three common planning periods, supplemented by one period per week for Data Inquiry, among their five preparation periods. The Principal also established an instructional team, comprised of kindergarten through grade 5 teachers, new and seasoned teachers, the Coach, and UFT representative. The team meets twice monthly to ensure vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment and coherence, as well as shared decision making related to curriculum and instruction. An outcome that arose from this team’s efforts is the purchase of *Reach*, a program developed by National Geographic to support the school’s instructional priorities, among which is to better address the needs of their ELLs through interactive, multimedia resources that include visual and text support to ensure accessibility of high-utility vocabulary and the acquisition and expansion of grade-level academic language. Additionally, the principal’s strategic use of budgetary resources has enabled her to hire an additional English as a Second Language (TESOL) teacher and a licensed special education teacher to provide supplementary teacher support for all students, particularly those in the school’s relevant subgroups, such as ELLs and students with IEPs, in all

subject areas taught by content specialists. This purposeful decision has resulted in teachers' collective focus on providing scaffolded instruction across content areas to meet students at their points of entry and support the movement of students with IEPs to least restrictive environments.

Additionally, one of the teachers in the school wrote a grant proposal for a Team Up for Technology grant, a partnership between the Jimmie Johnson Foundation, Lowe's and Samsung Hope for Children, sponsored by six-time NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Champion Jimmie Johnson, resulting in the award of \$48,000 for the school to update its technology resources, providing students with more time to do research projects. A recent data analysis of DRA2 scores, which reveals the advancement of 95% and 83% among the lowest third subgroup of students in grade 4 and 5, respectively, underscores the noteworthy progress made by the lowest third in closing the achievement gap. The principal's precision leadership has resulted in increased collaboration and improved student outcomes.

- Highly collaborative, cohesive, and reflective teacher teams thoughtfully appraise student work and align practices to address identified needs, resulting in student progress, enhanced teacher inquiry and reciprocal accountability. (4.2)
  - All teachers participate on inquiry teams across the school and adapt protocols, such as Looking Collaboratively at Student Work and think-pair-share, to design and norm criteria for examining student work and elicit evidence for closing the gap between current and desired performance. Prior to each meeting, the facilitator, a role that is rotated among the team members, disseminates questions to the team. Teachers then collaboratively elicit evidence to identify trends across their grades, make data-informed decisions for instructional groupings, provide useful feedback to students, and adjust pacing and learning experiences to engender school-wide improvement. They then share their strategies and tools with members across grades, as well as the larger school community. To help guide teachers' planning sessions, the school leaders provide all teams with questions, such as, "What standards does the unit address?" and "How have you differentiated the process, product, or content for Students with Disabilities (SWDs), ELLs, and accelerated students?" In preparation for the first grade teacher team meeting, focused on the written presentations from the science animal research unit, teachers responded to questions provided by the group's facilitator, such as, "What common strengths, weaknesses, or patterns did you observe in analyzing your student work?" "Looking at your students' animal research projects, how does the analysis inform or change your lesson, unit, or presentation of content?" and "What challenges have you experienced during the implementation of this unit?" Following this groundwork, they collaboratively looked at students' finished products, using a document camera, to reflect on aspects of their practice and generate ideas for refining their teaching approaches, such as adjusting their student groupings and providing tailored scaffolds in ways that would produce better student outcomes. One teacher on the first grade teacher team shared a resource she retrieved from the Internet on classroom modifications and accommodations for SWDs. Each team meeting concludes with a brief reflection, during which time teachers discuss future implications for teaching, using prompts such as "We need to start doing..." "We need to continue doing..." and "We need to stop doing..." In addition, each grade also has *Dropbox*, a file management and sharing platform that teachers can access from their computers, laptops, iPads, or mobile devices, such as smartphones. Teachers use this system for file sharing and collaboration by

storing and sharing files and folders, including their CCLS-aligned rubrics, units of study, curriculum maps, and other resources. The diffusion of expertise and capacity building, as well as coherence and alignment of teachers' practices, has promoted a community of inspired and empowered professionals who teach and lead with deeper knowledge and efficiency, as evidenced by the increased grades on formative assessments and elevated levels of teacher efficacy, according to teachers' reflections, as well as noted progression along the trajectory of teacher effectiveness. One teacher asserted that the increased time for professional collaboration is "Fabulous because we interact and really understand what is happening in each other's classrooms." Another stated, "We share strategies and ideas and propel our lowest third." These testimonials affirm teachers' robust collaboration and collective responsibility for working towards the overarching schoolwide goals, one of which is increased student achievement of the school's lowest third.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Further refine system for tracking observation data to determine the impact of schoolwide professional development and student achievement goals on teachers' collective professional growth (4.1)
  - Teachers' individual progression is well documented, supplemented by reflection, and interim goal setting, which results in the identification of areas for growth on dimensions of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, school leaders provide feedback, focused on specific goals that teachers set for themselves at the start of the school year, and balance attention to teachers' strengths as well as constructive challenges. However, school leaders do not optimize use of available technology tools to track teacher observation data at frequent intervals to support their ongoing analysis of teacher development and inform professional learning pathways targeted to teachers' individual areas of growth in order to push higher adult and student outcomes. Thus, opportunities for using observation data to identify trends in teaching performance and target instructional improvements to inform professional development across all areas for professional growth are limited.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Gil Hodges	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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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>