

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The New Lots School
Elementary School K213
580 Hegeman Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207

Principal: Stanley Moise

Dates of review: March 18-19, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The New Lots School is an elementary school with 483 students from grade pre-kindergarten to grade five. The school population comprises 78% Black, 17% Hispanic, 3% White, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 16% 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 91%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Pedagogical practice is enhanced by frequent cycles of observations so that teachers are aware of their strengths, their challenges and their next steps in improving academic outcomes for all students. (4.1)
 - Teachers are grouped into four tiers according to their observed levels of expertise. Tier one teachers are able to help others improve their practice and tier four teachers may be new or require intensive support. Teachers in higher tiers are visited more frequently by school leaders and coaches than those in lower tiers. The observation cycle begins in the fall with a needs assessment, goal setting, and the development of an intervention plan, then progresses to the support phases, that can include intervisitations with peer teachers or working with coaches, and finally, to a follow up observation. Teachers meet with the principal to discuss progress toward meeting goals at midyear and again at the end of the year. As teaching practices improve or change, the teacher is reassigned to a new tier and professional development and support are adjusted accordingly. These changes are discussed at cabinet meetings where school leaders debrief the observations they conducted that week and review the schedule of upcoming visits, which are tracked to ensure that all teachers are supported according to their identified needs. The principal establishes a calendar of weekly instructional foci for informal class visits, such as, lesson objectives, bulletin boards, questioning, flexible grouping logs, or lesson summaries to ensure that all competencies from the Danielson Framework for Teaching are addressed in addition to the targeted areas identified for each individual teacher. School leaders use the Advance system to record formal and informal observations and give feedback to the teachers on how to improve their practice. The feedback references the strengths of the lesson, notes the areas for improvement, and includes required next steps, such as inviting students to respond to each other's comments. Another observation required the teacher to refer to professional development materials regarding note taking during student conferences. Observation recommendations reference the associated domain from the Danielson Framework and include a date by which the practice must be implemented and often include the date on which the teacher will be observed again. In addition, school leaders frequently provide verbal feedback after short "snapshot" visits and include data from the analysis of student work products in their written observations. For example, many observations note the number of students who were or were not able to complete an assignment successfully. As a result of this cycle of needs assessment, feedback, support, and evaluation the professional growth of teachers is encouraged, supported, and elevated.
- The principal allocates resources to provide for substantial targeted instruction and teacher collaboration resulting in student work that reflects school-wide goals and increased college and career readiness. (1.3)
 - The principal bases decisions on the primary goal of improving instruction. He deploys his cabinet daily to develop pedagogical skills and identify strategies for improving instruction. New to the school this year, he supports the structures he has put in place to further that goal with action plans that

include monitoring progress, gathering artifacts to illustrate progress, measuring impact, and reflecting on what has been learned. The principal purchased iPads for the 1st grade classes in order to increase tactile learning opportunities and has a grant to purchase *Smart* tables for the early grades. In addition, he also purchased Waterford, an online reading program that students can use at home as well as in school. The school maintains partnerships with organizations, such as Pure Elements Dance, Girl Scouts, and New York University that support the goals of engaging students in stimulating and rigorous activities such as robotics, dance, band, violin, and girl scouts. The school environment is enriched by displays of the work students produce as a result of these partnerships. Students created collage African masks that were part of a study on symmetry and pattern. The display was accompanied by peer critiques in which fellow students noted what they liked about the piece of art and made suggestions for improvement. In addition, the principal reorganized space in order to create space to accommodate the expansion of pre-kindergarten classes, thus making purposeful decisions to support instructional goals.

- When there were not enough students for a planned Integrated Co-Teaching class, the principal created a bridge class in kindergarten and first grade and reassigned the teachers to other grades where there was a need for strong teachers. To focus on the development of essential literacy skills to prepare students for the next grade and eventually for college and career, the school adjusted the program to allow for extended writing time in the upper grades and phonics in the lower grades. Teams of grade-level teachers focus on improving the writing skills of their students and hold themselves responsible for the progress their students make by creating common tasks and rubrics used to track progress across the school. Results of these efforts are evident throughout the building, where writing samples in all content areas are displayed in classrooms and hallways and can be found in student work folders and portfolios. For example, students in the dance program write essays about their understanding, interpretation and evaluation of the dances they study, and first graders write on the topic of what it means to be a classroom citizen. One student wrote that being a good classroom citizen means helping others, including younger siblings, with homework. The essay concludes with a statement that class citizens exhibit mature traits such as being “responsible, respectful and safe.”
- Unit and lesson plans are refined, and tasks revised, based on the analysis of student work to promote higher-order questioning and cognitive engagement in order to prepare students to achieve their full potential. (1.1)
 - The day begins with school announcements and a reminder to teachers to make the learning objectives and the connection to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) explicit to students in every lesson. Lesson plans consistently address the standards and incorporate the instructional shifts. There are school-wide foci on the acquisition of academic language, citing from texts and developing fluency with computation, which are evident in lesson plans in all grades. Lesson plans are reviewed weekly by school leaders as part of their observation routine to ensure they include learning objectives, connections to CCLS, high levels of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions, group activities, and assessments of learning. School leaders regularly norm the process they use to review lesson plans so there is coherence between lower and upper grades and consistent feedback for all content areas. College and career readiness is built into lesson plans

through the instructional focus on extended writing and phonics in all grades. Through these efforts, the school has a middle school readiness rating of almost 93%, which is higher than their peer group average of 88%.

- During a grade team meeting, teachers were observed using a student work discussion organizer to analyze student work from a pre-assessment for a unit that would begin in 10 days. The focus of the conversation was on how to refine the unit lessons and tasks with an emphasis on providing multiple entry points for students with disabilities and English language learners. For example, the team discussed student groupings to take into account the learning modalities and language skills of their students. They discussed how to modify the tasks with different graphic organizers and levels of questions and planned how they would share the revised lesson plans with pull-out service providers so that all students would be cognitively engaged in learning the same content. Similar activities take place in other grades as evidenced by meeting minutes and agendas. As a result, students across the school engage in cognitively challenging tasks, such as writing and illustrating multi-page books about the four seasons in kindergarten, and making conjectures and debating the importance of the Boston Tea Party in grade 4.
- Teachers create rubrics and regularly refine lesson plans after analyzing results from common assessments that lead to coherent adjustments to instruction. (2.2)
 - A school-wide yearly assessment calendar for all grades in all core content areas indicates when each grade will be giving diagnostic or performance tests aligned to the school's curricular choices and teacher designed end-of-unit assessments. A school-wide grading policy outlines the weight for homework, projects, class participation, and tests and quizzes. Teachers determine the weight of individual projects in each unit of study. These units include assessment tasks and customized rubrics that provide students with feedback in a grade-appropriate level. A kindergarten informational writing rubric uses smiley faces and frowns to indicate performance levels with text descriptions. For example a smile with a "thumbs up" indicates level 4 for which students must include multiple details, vocabulary from the text, and some complex sentences in their essay. A grade four informative writing rubric informs students that in order to get a level 4, the topic must be strongly stated with no confusion to the reader and that the paper must have a strong introduction with plenty of details. Furthermore, the reading program in the early grades produces detailed progress reports for each teacher so they can track how often their students are engaged in online activities and improvements in their performance levels for phonics, comprehension and vocabulary. Teachers create common assessments in all core content areas and administer pre-assessments before units of study begin. They discuss the results of these assessments at grade meetings and create action plans to address their findings. In one analysis of a math chapter test, it was determined that the next steps included giving students more practice with writing extended responses. The aggregated results of these assessments are regularly analyzed at cabinet meetings to determine progress toward achievement of school-wide goals and professional development needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen pedagogical practices and strategies across grades to ensure that all students have access to curricula leading to consistently high levels of student thinking and participation. (1.2)
 - The new principal believes strongly in the goal of improving pedagogy by requiring coherent lesson plan development and identifying and supporting teachers as they improve their practices. In the majority of classes teachers use tasks and homework assignments that are differentiated to take into account the learning modalities of their students, and to determine if their students are learning the content. For example, students in a fourth grade Integrated Co-Teaching math class were grouped according to the level of facility they have with fractions. Each group was provided with materials, such as manipulatives or graphic organizers, and was assigned tasks with directions that were specific for the needs of their group. In one kindergarten class, students were moving back and forth between groups to model subtraction and addition. They were using wipe-off white board slates to record their work. The teacher was able to assess instantly when a student was struggling with the mathematical notation and students were helping each other to correct errors. In a pre-kindergarten class, students created a bar graph using a card with their name written on it to depict whether they walked, took a bus or drove in a car to school that day. The name cards were arranged in alphabetical order on the rug in front of the bar graph so the teacher and paraprofessional could guide those students who did not recognize the letters in their name. In a third grade class, students were competing to be the first to correctly answer a fluency quiz on division facts. However, in other classes, questioning was teacher-dominated and, for the most part, volleyed between the student and teacher, sometimes with insufficient wait time for students to formulate their own responses. This unevenness in pedagogical practices limits the opportunities for all students to participate fully and consistently demonstrate higher order thinking.
- Involve all stakeholders in the process of developing, tracking for progress, and revising school-level goals that promote social-emotional growth and academic performance for all students. (3.1)
 - The principal articulates, and shares with his cabinet, a clear vision to improve the school with identifiable goals and next steps focused on improving instructional practices in all grades. Teachers report that they support the new principal in implementing the changes to practice that he is requiring and one noted that teachers are willing “to go above and beyond with respect to lesson planning.” While the principal and teachers are now engaging in deep analysis of data on student performance to inform changes to curriculum and professional development, instructional practices have not changed as rapidly across every classroom to reflect the intensity of the stated goals. Furthermore, parents interviewed conveyed that the mission of the school was generally to prepare their children for college and beyond, without any details about the focus on improving instruction. The lack of comprehensive communication with families and participation in the goal-setting process about school improvement efforts limits their input and contribution to decision-making regarding school improvement plans.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The New Lots 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				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed