

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Katherine R. Snyder

22K222

**3301 Quentin Road
Brooklyn
NY 11234**

Principal: Theresa Olivieri

**Dates of review: November 26, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Katherine R. Snyder is an elementary school with 864 students from pre-K through grade 5. The school population comprises 16% Black, 17% Hispanic, 45% White, 20% Asian, and 2% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 21% 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 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and faculty create a safe, supportive, and mutually respectful school culture that celebrates diversity and encourages student voice, thus promoting positive personal and academic growth in all students. (1.4 ab)
 - The school's culture of kindness and respect is sustained through the explicit integration of its *Respect and Kindness* campaign, where school leaders keep tallies of classes in which students exude positive citizenship traits, such as respect, compassion, and responsibility. The data are entered on a large bar graph that is prominently displayed near the general office. Every Friday, the administration announces the names of selected students who have conveyed appropriate citizenship traits for the week. Additionally, school leaders have created crosswalks linking academic and personal behaviors with the Habits of Mind for students, the Danielson framework for teachers, and connections to the home for parents. For example, they linked work habits and organizational skills to the relevant Habits of Mind, such as *striving for accuracy*, *creating*, *imagining*, and *innovating*, and *applying past knowledge to a new situation* to support academic work in a safe, inclusive environment. Suggestions for parents include setting up workspaces for children, establishing routines, providing checklists, and giving children the opportunity to provide input on what they need in their workspaces to help develop personal and social growth skills. Through the school's intentional focus on the Habits of Mind, students who have applied, and were subsequently selected, following a rigorous job application process, including an interview with the principal, serve as morning announcers, are encouraged to recite a Habit of Mind philosophy after the pledge of allegiance each day, and give their own research-based, specific suggestion for adopting a particular habit. The school endorses student expression through the Student Council, comprised of 10 members in grades 3 through 5, who meet monthly with the library teacher and principal during which time they self-select activities in which to engage, such as recycling efforts because they "want to help the world" and "do a good deed." An example of this group's focus on philanthropic causes is the self-initiated collection of cans and plastic bottles to help the environment. Another example involves students' efforts to aid those in the Philippines impacted by the recent typhoon, by making and selling bracelets. Similarly, the efforts of one fourth grade class, whose students decided to supplement the staff's efforts to support the battle against breast cancer made the decision to create and sell pink rainbow loom bracelets, and have helped raise \$689.00 for the Susan G. Komen organization. With the unwavering support of the staff, the students' positive energies toward global causes help shape the positive and respectful attitudes for the diverse culture of the school, provide ample opportunities for student voice, and help all members of the school community toward meetings students' academic and personal goals. As a result, students state that they are motivated to learn and relish coming to a safe school, as evidenced by a stable 3-year average attendance rate of 95%.

- School leaders communicate high expectations to all stakeholders in order to position students on a path towards college and career readiness. (3.4 ab)
 - The principal ensures mutual accountability for high expectations from the staff around instruction and pedagogical practices. This is communicated through her opening day faculty conferences, during which time she shares PowerPoint presentations that highlight the school goals and the citywide instructional expectations, as necessitated by the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). In addition to implementing the Danielson Framework, the staff is expected to include the implementation of the University of Pittsburgh's Principles of Learning and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) ideologies, along with the provision of detailed overviews of the structures for shared, guided, and independent reading, conferring with students, discussion techniques, using complex texts, asking text dependent questions, engaging students in appropriately challenging tasks, and maintaining home reading contracts to ensure that students keep up with their independent reading. The school hosts a variety of parent workshops, during which time parents are presented an overview of the CCLS as well as presentations by teachers on how to support their children at home with attainment toward CCLS mastery. During these sessions, the parents are provided information from the Department of Education's (DOE) website on college and career readiness, including the distinct shifts in the rigorous content for English language arts (ELA), math and application of knowledge through higher order skills. Each presentation given to staff and parents is accompanied by a quote, such as one by Helen Keller, that reads "Alone we can do so little; together we can so much." The principal has also launched an email communications tool, in which she personally shares the school's expectations and broadcasts school wide events for success with individual parents and the larger parent community. Likewise, she and her assistant principals send out monthly reading letters to emphasize the Habits of Mind and help support students' repertoires of reading strategies, such as using and creating schema and monitoring for meaning. Contained in these communiqués are the school's concentrated efforts on Costa and Kallick's Habits of Mind across the grades and copies of important letters, reminders, and schedules. In addition to a yearlong calendar of workshops, based on parent feedback to the parent coordinator, including, but not limited to, the middle school process, beginning reading strategies, supporting English language learners, and understanding the New York State tests, ensure that the school maintains open communication with parents. In addition, teachers provide parents with timely progress reports after each unit assessment. One parent championed, "I always have the feeling that we all speak the same language; they (school staff) give me the feeling that they are my family" further exemplifies this premise. Other parents expressed their overall gratification with the school, as evidenced by the following statements, "I have always felt like family; the school helped raise my kids!" and "The school is my water." Accordingly, 96% of parents indicated that the school is preparing their child well to be promoted to the next grade or graduate.

- School leaders, through frequent cycles of classroom observations, identify strengths and challenges to provide high quality feedback that supports teachers' professional goals, reflection and systematic improvement. (4.1 ab)
 - The implementation of the Danielson framework accentuates teacher development in targeted areas of practice and offers opportunities for school leaders to provide feedback and actionable next steps that are aligned to teachers' professional goals in order to improve instruction across the school. Additionally, the information from the observation process is used to plan professional development. This year, the principal and her assistant principals have created a document entitled, "Danielson Differentiated by Data" (DDD), which captures the findings of teachers' practice according to the Danielson framework. The DDD has helped school leaders identify targeted areas of practice to provide feedback and actionable next steps that are aligned to improving targeted teacher practices as well as instruction across the school. School leaders also use the DDD to capture teachers' mastery along the trajectory of effectiveness, and they conduct comparative analyses using data gathered from this year's most recent observations matched to those revealed last June. Specific, individualized feedback such as, "Questions need to be debatable as opposed to those that require a simplistic answer," "Encourage students to assist their peers to clarify or expand on what they said," and "Give opportunities to have questions explored and engage in dialogue" are noted in observation reports and serve to provide actionable feedback and next steps to advance teacher performance. Consequently, school leaders are intentionally focusing on the speaking and listening standards, with a deliberate emphasis on academic conversations, in a series of well planned workshops to ensure that teachers are supported in their attainment toward higher levels of effectiveness in their questioning and discussion techniques. As a result of these high yield administrative actions that focus school improvement efforts and the attention to consistent, thoughtful plans for elevating teacher practice aligned to teachers' goals, school leaders have been able to advance the professional development of teachers and enhance student learning outcomes. This is illustrated by a 16% increase along the trajectory of effectiveness, specifically, in Domain 3b, questioning and discussion techniques.

- Teacher teams engage in collaborative inquiry to examine student work and make key decisions about curricula and teaching practices aligned to the CCLS to increase students' learning outcomes. (4.2ab)
 - Teachers, in their respective grade level team meetings, look at student work to determine alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), strengths and areas in need of further development. One team, for example, used a worksheet to capture their work and respond to a series of questions, such as: What do you notice about the work? What does the student understand? What questions do you have about the work? The teachers then decided upon suggestions for the student as well as identified possible interventions to help ameliorate the student's struggles. This thoughtful dialogue in teacher teamwork has transformed the way teachers are working across the school and results in school-wide coherence, teacher practice, and instructional adjustments to curricula and unit plans that result in shared improvements across the

school. The teachers selected for the vertical team meeting also share their work and discuss implications for grade-wide instructional planning as they prepare to launch their upcoming units. As a result, teachers report that students are now writing better paragraphs, with stronger introductions and conclusions, are adding inner thought, and text-based evidence that reflect the CCLS-aligned instructional shifts. This intentional focus on increasing the amount of time teachers have for collaborative planning and shared responsibility has sharply increased opportunities for teachers to review student progress and has contributed to an increased number of students meeting standards on both English language arts and math assessments, yielding an average grade-level proficiency in ELA and math of 3.0. Even more compelling is the fact that the school is 1 of 236 public schools in the United States that has earned the noteworthy distinction of being recognized as a 2013 National Blue Ribbon award winner for steadily increasing student achievement over the past 6 years.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine teachers' use of divergent questioning techniques and scaffolds that match students' diverse needs to ensure inquiry into complex thinking, high levels of participation, and consistently rigorous work products for all learners. (1.2bc)
 - Teachers' plans across the school reflect the CCLS, learning targets, habits of mind, academic vocabulary, and differentiated grouping. Across classrooms visited, teachers use anchor texts to help guide students and stimulate student thinking. In one ELA lesson, the teacher encouraged the students to answer focus questions. In this class, the students were grouped according to data gathered from the teachers' conference notes and running records. For example, for each "station," the teacher had the students' learning target, vocabulary words from their respective texts, and focus questions. Specifically, in Group 1, the students' target was "I can stop and jot to find the problem and solution in *Bonk and Lucky Buckeye*." These students were also encouraged to use post-its and place them in their notebooks as they thought of questions to ask themselves about the book. This teacher also commented in students' notebooks to provide specific feedback and asked questions that support students' learning. In another class, the teachers encouraged the students explore variations for recording two-digit subtraction. This lesson included two parallel mini- lessons, guided practice, with differentiated data-based grouping, to support students who were at varied levels of proficiency. In addition to "think boards," on which visual learners were able to draw representations to depict their number sentences, the teachers used multi-level teacher-created worksheets and graphic organizers and asked high level questions to push student thinking as well as scaffold the work for their respective groups of students. However, in the majority of classes visited, the strategic use of high quality, level 4 Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions to bolster students' thinking and participation and accommodate varied student needs was not consistently evidenced across the school. Although seated in groups after mini-lessons, in most classrooms, all students worked on the same task with limited peer-to-peer dialogue to foster critical thinking supported by inferential or textual evidence. In addition,

most teachers' questions required yes/no or unison answers, and encouraged the students to recall and, occasionally, elaborate upon the responses of their peers. This results in missed opportunities to engage students in student-led discussions, peer appraisal, and other collective efforts in order to support students in taking a stance on complex issues and supporting their stance with applicable evidence, coherent opinions or arguments derived from readings of printed text, as well as viewings of related video clips.

- Align teachers' use of assessments and rubrics to curricula in order to consistently glean valuable insights about student progress, provide actionable feedback to all students, and inform adjustments to instruction. (2.2ab)
 - Across the school, teacher teams are involved in creating grade-wide, embedded unit assessments and they are working on improving the alignment of their assessments to key standards reflected in their units, such as speaking and listening. Additionally, teachers have begun the work of assessing student work products against CCLS-aligned rubrics. However, rubrics across the school do not consistently reflect content or task specific attributes and there is much variance in the quality of teacher feedback to students, which limits student progress. Additionally, some teachers use conference notes, checklists, and exit slips to ascertain gaps between current student aptitudes and the skills and strategies necessitated by the planned CCLS-aligned units. However, the practice of utilizing authentic, high-level common, formative assessments by teachers to ensure that student work is aligned to curricular standards in order to tailor lessons and units to students' specific strengths and needs, is inconsistent across classrooms, thus, limiting teachers' capacities to monitor student progress, set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning, and meet students' diverse needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Katherine R. Snyder	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
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