



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

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

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Shallow Junior High School**

**Intermediate School K227**

**6500 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11204**

**Principal: Dr. Edwin Hernandez**

**Dates of review: April 9-10<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Shallow Junior High School is an intermediate school with 1,353 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 26% Hispanic, 15% White, and 58% Asian students. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions to increase instructional coherence and thoughtful use of technology to meet student needs as evidenced by an improvement in student achievement. (1.3)
  - The principal, new to the building in August, created a program that instituted transparent learning structures that are common across content and grades, something that was not present prior to his arrival. For example, he created parallel programming for English as second language students to literacy classes, so English language learners are guaranteed intense instruction using the same content in literacy. To that end, he additionally established topic-focused professional learning teams by grade and department to increase teacher collaboration by reviewing teacher performance, interventions and instructional delivery. This has resulted in building a culture of collaboration and trust among teachers. Under the principal's guidance, data is now collected, reviewed and used to make informed, targeted adjustments to curricula and instruction, evidenced by the student work products reviewed at teacher team meetings. A common planning period, which was established by the principal, takes place weekly, in addition to professional learning communities, and both enable teachers to create common practices of instruction in their area of content to address school wide goals. Another initiative under the new principal is to increase the use of technology. Smart Boards, iPads, document cameras, mobile labs and interactive software are seen in every classroom and used as tools with which teachers can more effectively deliver instruction to all students. In addition, a quarterly system of assessment, measurement and evaluation, all created online, guides the school's practice of teaching and learning. This has resulted in gains for all learners, and specifically for improvements by English language learners in grades 6, 7 and 8, who showed a 2% gain across all content areas.
- Using the Danielson Framework, school leadership observes teachers to analyze outcomes, determining how to elevate practice, and to provide teachers with individual support, thereby promoting professional growth. (4.1)
  - The principal uses the Danielson Framework to provide immediate feedback on performance to teachers with recommendations for support. The principal gives feedback and next steps to teachers which include intervisitations to other classrooms designated for best practices. Teachers state during team meetings that the administrators provide them with a great deal of support, including but not limited to peer intervisitation, modeling lessons and network support. They feel comfortable asking for clarification on areas they want to improve. The school's focus this year are domains two and three, specifically using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging and empowering students in learning, using assessment in instruction and having teachers demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness to student needs. Professional Learning Communities meet weekly during extended day, where teachers focus on looking at student work. The four new teachers in the school

receive targeted support in their area of need and are mentored by the English language learner school coordinator and the Network, with specific support for their students with special needs and English language learners twice a week. This supportive, collaborative approach to teacher effectiveness has led to improved teacher practice, showing a 50% gain for teachers who were originally rated ineffective in the first round of observations to being rated effective with the most current round of observations.

- Professional development driven by the Danielson Framework and school performance data is conducted on a monthly basis with the assistance of the Center for Integrated Education, which ensures compliance with the Department of Education's requirements of three hours per month. Guided professional development, both created in house and outsourced, provides the venue that supports school goals. The sessions are a result of observations of teachers, discussions at team meetings and targeted professional development sessions from identifying school-wide trends in practice, resulting in improved teacher practice throughout the building. An example of this is seen throughout the hallways as evidenced by the bulletin boards. Each board shows student rigor, as well as differentiation by ability level addressing the overall content. Additionally, there was a 35% increase of teachers moving from effective to highly effective measured against the Danielson Framework.
- The principal has created a wonderfully collaborative learning environment that maintains mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and social growth of students and adults. (1.4)
  - The principal, in his first year, has done a wonderful job of unifying and validating his staff. Increasing collaboration among teachers has built a sense of unity and community. He has incorporated decision making structures that allow teachers to have a voice in the teaching and delivery of the content of their subjects. An example of this is seen as teachers remain way beyond the school day to collaborate with one another and seek out the principal for guidance. This practice, which they shared during a team meeting discussion, they enjoy for the first time in their professional career. They indicate that this is due to the new leadership's ability to thoughtfully listen when they turn to him for advice. Students are empowered to assess their own work and instilled with a sense of responsibility in their own learning and progress. Using an exit pass in every classroom, they indicate "What am I learning? What do I understand well? What do I need help in?," allowing teachers to continually assess strengths and areas for improvement after each lesson, which helps to improve their practice and differentiate subsequent lessons. In addition, guidance counselors are on grade floors to support an increased system of mediation and peer mediation with the dean and guidance counselor, resulting in a safe learning environment. During the large group discussion, one seventh grade student indicated that the peer mediation group conducted by the guidance counselor helped to build her self-esteem. Unique to this school is a computer tracking program that records lateness as students enter the building in the lobby. This allows assistant principals and deans to track lateness, so that immediate feedback is given to students and their families. Additionally, the school uses SKEDULA, a computer program that serves as a viable portal and means to support transparent communication between teachers and

parents. Parents indicated during the parent meeting that the new school newsletter and messenger keeps them informed of all events and activities. In addition, they appreciated workshops on the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and they particularly valued the workshops on bullying and internet safety, emphasizing the timeliness of both topics. Parents also shared that the Parent English as a Second Language Academy is well attended, providing parents with the opportunity to be better partners in their child's education. This has resulted in the continued academic and personal growth of all students as evidenced by student growth on the performance assessments, which indicated an overall growth of 3% on both English language arts and math performance assessments.

- The principal has a purposeful, coherent vision of school improvement that is shared with the entire school community, monitored and benchmarked for progress and supported by all constituents. (3.1)
  - The principal's main goal upon assuming the principalship was to build a culture of collaboration and trust among all staff. As such, the motto of the school has become "Building a Better Tomorrow Today". In addition, the development of an effective model of organizational development with defined structures, such as common planning time to plan units of study based on the student data and host professional learning communities for teachers, are common across content areas and grades. This has led to a visible coherence in the building. In addition, the staff has increased student-to-student interaction and reduced teacher-directed lectures as the dominant modality of instruction. This was readily seen in one social studies classroom, where the teacher was merely the facilitator as students discussed changing the voting age. Students built off their peers' remarks and called upon one another to further the discussion. Discussion topics such as, "How do you connect 'taxation without representation' to our current government?," pushed students to make connections to real life situations. Using the Smart Board, photographs and other visual aids, the pacing of the lesson was excellent with all students involved. In addition, at the end of the lesson, students submitted exit slips upon leaving the lesson, enabling the teacher to access student understanding of the lesson and provide next steps. In another classroom, English language learners were working in pairs to review literal meaning using rigorous vocabulary. Able to refer to numerous prompts in the room, students again submitted exit slips upon leaving the classroom to evaluate their understanding of the lesson. The use of a rubric for student feedback has been incorporated and standardized throughout the school. In addition, the use of standardized school-wide assessment questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy has been incorporated and standardized throughout the school for the purpose of increasing student-to-student communication. For example, in each classroom, there are sentence starters across content areas, such as "I agree, I would like to add..." This allows all sub groups of students to participate in a rich discussion. In addition, the principal has implemented a quarterly system of assessment, measurement and evaluation which guides the school's practice of teaching and learning. The school is organized according to the Deming cycle of improvement, where teachers plan, assess, measure and evaluate and then begin the cycle again for four consecutive cycles. This quarterly system of assessment, measurement and evaluation guides the practice of teaching

and learning to better serve individual students and increase academic outcomes based on an analysis of the data. This is evidenced by the gains in academic performance as measured by the most recent performance assessments conducted at the school.

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

- Build rigor and coherence in all lessons across content areas, aligned to CCLS, so that all students in sub groups would engage in meaningful activities that would lead to improved student outcomes. (1.1)
  - A baseline structure for the curriculum has been completed and teachers continue to build upon learning targets and instructional objectives aligned to the CCLS and the citywide instructional objectives. Teachers use Engage New York to infuse practices that support continual growth and student achievement. The principal has parallel programming for English language learners during literacy to maximize their performance while learning the same content. However, currently, units of study do not reflect in-depth planning for high performing students, which would support their continual growth and push their thinking. These units of study are beginning to develop, but are not completed as yet across all content areas.
- Build upon teachers' assessment practices so as to consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment so that teachers make effective adjustments for all students. (2.2)
  - The school is using a number of common assessments, both formative and summative, including, but not limited to exit slips, turn and talk, student checklists, and student rubrics. Although there are common assessments across classrooms, teachers are not using them to adjust curricula and instruction during the lesson as effectively as possible. For instance, during a one class observed, the task at hand required an understanding of content-specific vocabulary. A number of students did not understand the terms and, although the key words were listed, there were no accompanying visuals. This resulted in a missed opportunity to use the assessments to identify those students who were weak in academic language and needed a different approach to complete the task. In addition, students are just beginning to evaluate their own work. In some classrooms, they are looking at exemplars and developing their own student rubrics for various forms of writing. Once the rubric is created, the students are not judging their piece of writing according to the rubric. Instead, the teacher is conferencing with them for next steps, thereby impeding student ownership to identify their next own steps, and coherence school wide for student self-evaluation.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Shallow Junior High School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			X				
<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?		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				
<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?				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				
<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?				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				
<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>