

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Janice Marie Knight School**

**K235**

**525 Lenox Road  
Brooklyn  
NY 11203**

**Principal: Laurence Lord**

**Dates of review: March 17-19 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Janice Marie Knight School is an elementary-middle school with 1228 students from pre-k through grade 8. The school population comprises 94% Black, 2% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 4% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- High expectations strategically foster a culture for learning, whereby mutual accountability for school-wide success engenders productive support toward next level preparation. (3.4)
  - The principal articulates high expectations for all members of the school faculty and staff. Regular grade conferences, faculty meetings, a monthly school-wide calendar of events, individual professional conferences, and conversations raise the bar for the level of work expected school-wide. New York Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and professional development afford faculty comprehensive support in building pedagogic skills embedded in the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* to expand teacher capacity in offering high level, engaging instruction that motivates students and set the highest expectations for elevated practice. Consequently, inter-visitations, fish bowl protocols, reviews of teacher data, and feedback from coaches and assistant principals combined with network support demonstrate the culture of the school as that of mutual accountability for moving students forward. Messages of high expectations maximize shared responsibility for school-wide success. Hence, teachers receive training to encourage daily use of the Depths of Knowledge and Hess matrices to achieve expectations of high-level engagement toward better student outcomes. Accordingly, highly effective teachers willingly accept grade change assignments in order to bolster early grade proficiency aimed at meeting the expectation that all teachers are responsible for all students experiencing adequate success. As a result, the principal reports notable movement in early grade assessment data.
  - School leaders, teachers, and parents hold students to high expectations and provide them with academic opportunities to reach them. Thus, clearly communicated standards create adult ownership for the paths each student must take toward achieving learning goals. Parents report that *Engrade*, an online system used to communicate student information to parents, teachers and students, provides families with information about student performance allowing them to engage teachers in ongoing conversations about progress. Although parents report that the amount of homework and projects overwhelm their children at times, they appreciate and praise that the motive drives career and college readiness. Therefore, they strongly support what one parent described as "passion for learning" that puts their children on a trajectory to success. Students also report that teachers have high expectations that push them to do their absolute best providing them with direct instruction and practice with CCLS objectives. As a result, at the Lenox Academy, a substantial number of students meet rigorous criteria for acceptance into specialized high schools and prestigious programs such as Prep for Prep. All students, beginning at sixth grade, participate in *Growth Mindset*, a program of core beliefs that purports levels of success can be attained through understanding and practicing a set of prescribed principles and behaviors. As an example, *Embrace change; Intelligence can be developed; and See effort as the path to mastery* are tenets that anchor expectations, thus, as one student described, the school's high expectations is its most positive attribute.

- The school has engaging, coherent and challenging curricula, aligned with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), which promotes college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
  - The school's comprehensive Common Core (CCLS) aligned curricula engages students in rigorous academic tasks that promote college and career readiness in all grades. All key standards, with particular attention to writing traits, target critical thinking and problem solving as reflected in modifications to curriculum maps linked to Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) in all content areas. Thus, curriculum mapping using Rubicon Atlas as a framework incorporates all components of *Journeys*, *Expeditionary Learning*, *Go Math!*, and *CMP3* units of study. The result of adopted CCLS aligned resources is integration of instructional shifts such as embedded performance tasks that require comprehension of complex text and emphasis on acquisition of basic number skills in lower grades. Making Your Thinking Visual (MYTV), a school created approach to math fluency via verbal and written justification and reasoning anchors advanced learning standards in upper grades. The focus on coherency in curriculum prepares students for access to higher learning opportunities. As evidenced by the A grade in performance on the NYC Progress Report for the 2012-2013 school year, the school's curricula aligned to key standards across all grades and subject areas support all students in meeting State standards.
  - The school's curricula address the needs of its diverse population of students who range in proficiency levels. For example, the school offers Advanced Placement (AP) classes for high proficient students. As such, curricula that emphasizes higher-order skills provide students in seventh and eighth grades with challenging academic tasks preparing them for Regents success on Living Environment, Algebra I, Intermediate Level Science Test (ILST), and Spanish Language Proficiency Exams. Because of meaningful and extensive learning experiences, approximately 99% of eighth graders earn high school credit in the aforementioned courses of study. Similarly, the school's 1% English language learner and 4% special education students have high-level exposure to standards-based curricula that ensure rigorous engagements and the level of work expected at each grade. An extended day program enhances engagements aligned to CCLS constructs. Hence, rigorous habits and high-order skills, embedded in curriculum designs across grades and subjects, push the thinking of all students.
- Multiple ongoing formative assessments to analyze trends in learning and determine student progress inform instructional decisions and adjustments to curricula that meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
  - The school conscientiously administers the NYC Performance Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) base, mid-, and end- line assessments. In addition, common grade-level English language arts and math unit assessments, Reading 3D benchmarks; conference notes; exit slips; quizzes; and the use of common rubrics support clear expectations for student learning, which are closely monitored to gauge student progress and surface teaching and learning trends toward closing cognitive gaps. Hence, the school-wide goal to increase student progress is fueled by

thoughtful use of formative data by teachers who report that growth areas in their practice and in student performance, uncovered through regular data analysis, lead to differentiated re-teaching using flexible grouping, collective resolve of next steps, and consistent improvement of teacher-generated assessments. As a result, the needs of all students are met as evidenced in high quality writing products, increases in reading levels, and class growth data indicating learning progression in math across subgroups.

- Teachers' use of an assortment of assessments is the bedrock of students' belief that they are learning and improving in their conceptual knowledge and application of skills. As reported by one student, "Teachers let everybody learn because they check in often and go over work to help [them] meet the standards". In addition, students across the school use self-assessment strategies to monitor their own progress and determine next steps. For instance, students in fourth and fifth grades explain they simultaneously receive rubrics and tasks to guide their work and aid their ability to know steps toward meeting or exceeding standards. In an eighth grade English language arts class, students track their growth by identifying strengths and weaknesses in work products then analyze their work and graph results of graded assignments to gauge progress. More importantly, teachers and students use "Tracking My Growth", a student self-assessment system, which is used to continually record performance results, teaching points, outcomes on independent practice activities, log teacher assistance, and note reflections on interventions. Therefore, students are well aware of skills mastered and those in need of deeper concentration. This awareness of gaps in proficiency leads to effective adjustments to lessons and varied strategies that enhance opportunities for all students to address learning needs with and without support from their teacher.
- Teachers benefit from regular collaborative inquiry of student work promoting capacity building and shared responsibility for improving academic outcomes. (4.2)
  - A majority of teachers are involved in structured inquiry teacher teams. During grade meetings teachers work collaboratively to unpack units of study aligned with CCLS. These weekly collaborations focus on the school's goal of revising curriculum maps to align both vertically and horizontally with rigorous standards and instructional shifts. In turn, teacher teams use protocols to examine student work across classrooms. Shared responsibility for building instructional capacity results in assigned roles that ensure all contribute to the process. Hence, delving into State standards, units of study, and samples of student work surface trends that teachers analyze to strengthen practice and improve student performance. As an example the fourth grade team meeting, facilitated by a teacher on the grade, focused on a particular skill assessed on a recent MOSL. His facilitation included teaching points and resources that he credited with enabling student success. Looking at student work juxtapose Standard for Literature RI.4.8, the team facilitator explained that activating prior knowledge of what strengthens arguments, use of a variety of graphic organizers, close reads to eliminate vocabulary challenges, and the use of cohesive language will move students from merely citing evidence to providing evidence of author's reasons with particular points in the text. Subsequently, discourse among team members about additional teacher moves and instructional next steps inform adjustments to practice that

include models of writing that exemplify levels of proficiency. One teacher referred to teacher inquiry as adding to the "tool box". As a result, collective analysis of student data and shared responsibility for student progress benefit team members and students in achieving goals for both, groups of students and themselves.

### What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the school's work on discussion protocols to further learning opportunities, activate high-level thinking, and bolster participation towards even levels of student engagement across classrooms. (1.2)
  - Students examine solvents and solutes in a self-contained classroom and record visible effects; apply knowledge of ratios to real world situations using commission rates; and present research projects on abilities of superheroes, illustrative of false science phenomena. In addition, across classrooms students read and analyze complex text such as *Lyddie* by Katherine Paterson; make inferences about characters via analysis of their actions or words; and compare and contrast three dimensional shapes using words "*alike and different*" to demonstrate conceptual understanding in kindergarten. The school's focus leveraged by Danielson's *Domain 3: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques and Using Assessment in Instruction* guides its instructional practice and design of coherent curriculum. However, the skillful use of open-ended questions to support critical thinking and protocols that would allow for deep student to student discussion so that all students develop rigorous, academic habits is not yet an embedded practice limiting hastened movement of all students, including special education students, toward mastery of curriculum. Therefore, students experience uneven levels of thinking, participation, and engagement across classrooms.
- Sharpen feedback on teacher practice in order to establish critical links between teacher effectiveness, professional development, and instructional growth resulting in elevated classroom practices school-wide. (4.1)
  - Supervisors use the ADVANCE system to conduct regular observations of teacher practice using low inference data to evaluate performance. As such, for the most part, feedback to teachers articulates strengths, challenges, and actionable next steps. Recommendations for improving component scores connect to the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. Guidance enhances professional development and better supports teacher development. However, inconsistencies in feedback that links effectiveness with competencies was apparent as the feedback loop progressed evidenced in observation reports. Consequently, teachers' capacity to continuously elevate their practice is limited. Moreover, teacher assignments within the school community reflect the use of teacher observation reports to inform staffing decisions. This work also influences succession plans such as a teacher-in-charge position at the Early Childhood Center and the appointment of an internal coach to the position of assistant principal. Although the principal also develops a professional development plan to support his faculty, the plan is broad and does not yet delineate differentiated opportunities based on teachers' levels of ability or individual need impeding professional growth and hastened professional advancement.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Janice Marie Knight 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>