

# Quality Review Report

## 2013-2014

**Anne Sullivan  
Elementary/Intermediate School 238**

**1633 EAST 8<sup>th</sup> STREET  
BROOKLYN  
NY, 11223**

**Principal: Harla Joy Musoff-Weiss**

**Dates of review: May 12-13, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Isabel DiMola**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 238 Anne Sullivan is a K-8 school with 550 students from PK through grade 8. The school population comprises 5% Black, 52% Hispanic, 24% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 22% 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 93.1%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Leaders make effective, strategic organizational decisions that align with school instructional goals and support all efforts toward improving student learning. (1.3)
  - A comprehensive review of data, including student outcomes and teacher observations results in decisions to use resources to meet immediate and long term needs and specific action planning to meet those needs. Thorough item analysis of formative and summative assessments across the school set forth a need to build student capacity across grades to use evidence to support arguments. As such, a full time English language arts coach and staff developers work with administrators and teachers in developing and implementing a comprehensive professional development plan that builds teacher's instructional skills and promotes higher order thinking through questioning as well as introducing strategies that support students in identifying and using appropriate evidence from texts to support their claims and elevate the level of their writing. As such the school is making progress in reaching its overarching goals specific to instructional practice with teacher evaluation data that shows that 59% of teachers are effective in questioning and discussion while 15% are deemed highly effective in this area of pedagogy. Further, as part of the school's long term planning to reach the school's technology vision ensuring that students have access to the tools necessary to be successful in the 21st century, the principal uses resources and grants to provide all classrooms with SMART boards and computers, a new computer lab, laptop carts on every floor for classroom use, and i-Pads for use in classrooms. This technology supports instruction, allowing students to do in-class research, scaffold their learning with software programs in English language arts such as Achieve 3000 and the software program IXL in mathematics. A non-verbal student I uses the iPad to communicate and demonstrate her understanding to her teacher in a manner that was not possible before the incorporation of the technology into the classroom. The infusion of technology allows for students to have multiple pathways to garner information and demonstrate their progress toward reaching and exceeding learning goals.
  - Teacher teams meet at least twice a week to collaborate on developing curricula, including units of study, lesson plans and cognitively challenging tasks to measure student performance and progress. A vertical team that is represented by a member of every grade meets twice a month where they engage in vertical planning, identifying gaps in the curricula across grades and share best practices. A Core Knowledge team that is represented by teachers in grades Pre k through 2 meets twice a month to unpack and assess the Core Knowledge program, share best practices and analyze student work to understand the impact of the program on student outcomes. These sessions are supported by the administration and coaches and ensure that there is a coherent curriculum that aligns to the Common Core standards in use across the school. As a result, teachers are focusing on how their planning and pedagogy is affecting student learning with a specific focus on the overarching school goals of crafting questions that provide students with opportunities to engage in high level discussions and to create pieces of work that demonstrate critical thinking and mastery of standards.
- Teachers use assessments to understand student progress and adjust curricula and instruction to support student growth toward reaching and exceeding learning goals. (2.2)

- Across grades common assessments are used so that school leaders have a clear understanding of student progress and movement toward reaching learning targets. At the end of each English language arts and math unit there is an assessment that focuses on the strands of the Common Core standards addressed in the unit of study. The data from these assessments are disaggregated by item analysis, class and sub-groupings of students including those with special needs, English language learners and the school's bottom third. Administrators and teacher team leaders study the data and correlate the outcomes to the curricula and instructional practices, identify gaps and revise practice. For example, after reviewing student outcomes on several common writing tasks, it was noticed that students were not consistently meeting the expectations of the task as set forth by the common writing rubric. An analysis of the rubric demonstrated that the language was unclear and did not precisely communicate the intended expectations of the task, so students were unsure of what they were being asked to do. As a result, the English language arts team revised the writing rubric to clarify expectations in a more student friendly manner. Further, teacher teams continually analyze the rubric to ensure that it aligns to the tasks leading to vast majority of students demonstrating progress in using relevant facts from a text to support a claim as evidenced by data on writing tasks revealing that most students are making gains in their writing with English language learners showing 45% growth and students with special needs demonstrating 51% growth on tasks that measure progress on informational writing skill, exceeding benchmark targets.
- Teachers use multiple methods to check for understanding throughout each lesson including conferencing, on demand writing pieces, immediate review of math problems, and listening in on student conversations. Data is gathered throughout each lesson to provide information so students are in groups with tasks and activities that provide appropriate entry points to the content. For instance, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade math lesson had four groups, two were working independently, two were teacher directed all charting the frequency of data collected on student shoe size. The teacher guided groups used questioning and differentiated steps to ensure that students understood the process of the task. Teachers used a clip board to assess student responses in the groups that they guided. The independent groups had to answer questions that would be used for assessment. A teacher explained that a pre-assessment garnered data that was used to group the students for this activity. Students understand why they are in their assigned groups and can articulate their next learning steps and necessary actions to make progress toward reaching the standards. Students use self-assessment practices, such as checklists and reflections and collaborate with their teacher to determine when they are ready for next steps, resulting in partnerships between students and teachers and a transparent understanding of where students are toward reaching and exceeding learning goals.
- High expectations and meaningful communication with parents allows for a home-school partnership that results in improving student outcomes. (3.4)
  - School leaders regularly meet with faculty to communicate expectations for professionalism and instruction for the school year that aligns to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The principal is steadfast in her vision that the role of educators is to provide students with a warm, nurturing environment, where students are free to take risks and challenge themselves to continually improve. Students are the priority; they are to be valued and respected. Teachers understand that instruction is to be student centered with scaffolds and differentiation so that there is access for all learners. Ongoing professional development supports teachers in reaching the expectations of instruction, professional practice and social-emotional support

for students. For example, during team meetings, teachers engage with professional readings that address the school's instructional goals. An article, "Promoting Mathematical Discourse in the Classroom" from the professional journal, *Mathematics Teacher*, focuses on methods of increasing student opportunities to have meaningful discussions of content and concepts during math instruction and gives teachers access to strategies to plan student centered instruction in math. Teachers agree to implement a strategy discussed and then bring evidence to the team to evaluate the impact of the strategy, thereby creating a culture of mutual accountability. The principal and assistant principals reinforce the expectations with staff through emails, weekly notices and individual conversations. High academic expectations and a path to college and career readiness are shared with all students and families. Teachers share expectations with students through class goals, daily learning and teaching points, rubrics and goal setting. Students and parents in the middle school sign a contract that expresses behavioral and academic expectations. There is a comprehensive newsletter sent to elementary school parents every other month that gives explicit information on learning goals for current units of study, measures that parents can take to support learning and resources available or academic and social-emotional supports. The school uses Engrade, an online program that gives parents access to real time data, including attendance, homework and assessment results. In between report card periods, students receive progress reports that share student progress. Additionally, workshops for parents deepen understanding of the Common Core by giving parents opportunities to participate in tasks that students are asked to do. There are articulation meetings with students and parents at both the elementary and middle school level to ensure that students and families understand the expectations of the next level of schooling. Parents feel that the school is extremely supportive of the home school connection, and are always accessible to meet or have a discussion about a question or concern regarding student progress. A parent commented "the teachers are wonderful, anytime we need to speak with them, they make themselves available." There is clarity around academic and social expectations leading to student understanding of what is expected and a true partnership between the school and families, that articulates a consistent message of expectations to students with an understanding that they are responsible both in school and at home for their academic progress and performance.

- School leaders support pedagogy through evaluation of instruction that aligns to the Danielson Framework for Teaching resulting in teacher practice that positively affects student learning. (4.1)
  - The principal set forth an instructional focus of using assessment to understand student learning and plan effective instruction as well as to use questioning and discussion to engage students in cognitively challenging learning. To that end, the principal engages teachers in cycles of evaluation that aligns to the Danielson Framework of Teaching, where teachers are provided effective feedback and clear next steps toward improving their performance. Professional development opportunities align to the overall trends that observation data uncovers as well as opportunities for individuals specific needs. For example, whole school professional development includes support in questioning and discussion to promote critical thinking and how to use assessment to plan instruction. Then based upon individual observation feedback, individual teachers are invited to focused sessions that include support in communicating with students, engaging students in learning, and classroom management. All teachers have opportunities to build their leadership capacity with many volunteering to share best practice to support each other. The principal, assistant principals and coaches provide many avenues of support including new teacher mentoring, peer support and

class inter-visitations to highlight best practices including questioning and discussion, classroom management and student engagement. There is a culture of learning at the school and teachers appreciate the opportunities for professional growth and feel safe to be honest about their professional needs. Consequently, an analysis of informal and formal observation data indicates growing competency among the faculty in ability to use questioning to engage students in meaningful discussion with 74% of teachers rated effective and highly effective in this area and 87% of teachers being effective or highly effective in using assessment in instruction, thereby moving the school toward reaching its overarching goals.

## What the school needs to improve

- Expand the work of curriculum development to ensure that planning in all subjects provides students opportunities to experience rigorous instruction that promotes mastery of standards in all content areas. (1.1)
  - Curricula across grades align to the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with in depth units of study in English language arts, writing and mathematics. Units and plans explicitly set forth points of access for all learners including question scaffolds, leveled and supplemental text and technology to ensure that students with special needs and English language learners have appropriate entry points and opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking and skill mastery. Common core aligned programs of Core Knowledge in Kindergarten through grade 2 and Expeditionary Learning in grades 3 through 8 provides a comprehensive course of study in English language arts that allows students in all grades to engage in learning that aligns to the instructional shifts, specifically allowing for close reading of complex texts and tasks that promote the ability to make claims and use text based evidence to support a point of view. For example, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts unit focuses on Civil Rights, with readings on Women's Suffrage. The unit plan provides for numerous texts on the topic, including primary source documents that require close reading. Students are exposed to various skills lessons that result in access to the texts so they can complete a task making a claim on the right of women to vote. The Go Math program supports the math curriculum and supports planning of high level tasks that allow students to demonstrate understanding of complex, multi-step problems. As a result, there is coherence across the grades in these subject areas. However, the development of curricula in other subject areas including social studies and science is not comprehensive or explicit in planning rigorous, engaging instruction for all students, resulting in missed opportunities for students to have access to content materials and tasks that will allow for demonstration of mastery of content area standards.
- Enhance teacher pedagogy to ensure that instruction across all classrooms provides access for all students to cognitively challenging tasks promoting the skills to be college and career ready. (1.2)
  - School leaders and faculty share a core belief that that students learn best when provided opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks, with high level questions that spur rich, meaningful discussions allowing students to "figure it out" and not rely on being told what to think but rather use critical thinking skills to determine the best path to solve problems and communicate ideas. There is an expectation that high level questions, scaffolds and differentiation that align to student data will foster student learning and allow all students, including students with special needs and English language learners access to the curriculum. Instruction in some classes evidences the expectations set forth with several in serving as model classrooms. For example, a grade 1

English language arts lesson had students in groups looking at text based vocabulary. Some students worked with dictionaries and glossaries and discussed definitions in pairs, while other groups used graphic organizers and highlighters to use text context to understand word meaning. Students were highly engaged and could articulate the importance of the work they were doing. Another example is that of a grade 8 Integrated Co-Teaching math class where students were attempting to prove the Pythagorean Theorem. Students were grouped by skill level and were given tasks with appropriate access points and scaffolds that supported their learning. Students were engaging in rich conversations that demonstrated their content knowledge and their problem solving skills. The teachers acted as facilitators and supported groups as necessary. Although both lessons are representative of the school's vision of how students learn best, this level of instruction is not apparent in the vast majority of classes resulting in missed opportunities for students and student groups to engage in appropriately challenging tasks and activities that promote higher order thinking that allows demonstration of mastery of the standards.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

	UD	D	P	WD
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	

### 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?			<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>

### 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?			<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>

### 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?				<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>	

### Quality Review Scoring Key

<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>
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