

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

P.S. 241 Emma L. Johnston

Elementary School K241

**976 President Street
Brooklyn
NY 11225**

Principal: Frantz Lucius

**Dates of review: Oct 23-24, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Buffie Simmons**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 241 Emma L. Johnston is an elementary school with 658 students from pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 85% Black, 10% Hispanic, 2% and White students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's standards-based curriculum maps for math and for English language arts instruction provide students a clear pathway for Common Core Learning Standards-based opportunities that raise student achievement. (1.1)
 - The school, with Children First Network (CFI) support and Learner-Centered Initiatives (LCI), revised English language arts and math instruction to reflect the shift to informational text exposure in the curricular units while students use information to provide evidence to substantiate their viewpoint. The administration and teachers have developed a tracking document to identify these instructional shifts from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. Teacher teams platform student work products and grade level student learning outcome data as vehicles for refining learning experiences designed by individual teachers throughout curricular content areas. Teachers agreed to adopt the Go Math curriculum due to the extensive professional development and Common Core alignment. To promote college and career readiness the school has incorporated strategies such as close reading. Students critically examine a text, especially through multiple readings - identify their purpose for reading, determine the author's purpose for writing the piece, develop schema and understand systems of thought in the disciplines. In addition, the inclusion of web-based reading program with a focus on non-fiction has increased academic levels in the Fountas and Pinnell for third grade. As a result, students reading on grade level have increased more than 25% from February to May 2013 and have shown steady increase on similar local assessments for this school year.
 - School leaders review data including student work products and make strategic decisions to upgrade the curriculum with non-fiction guided reading material and a phonetic and fluency building program for all students, including special education students and English language learners. Academic tasks are developed from this material to help teachers focus instruction and support students in reaching the standards in reading and writing. Students use several texts on the same topic integrating information for their written products, advancing the school's goal for all students to demonstrate progress towards mastery in literacy. According to the item analysis of the 2013 grade 4 State test, the current grade 5 students received the lowest percentage in skills such as collect and interpret data, facts and ideas from unfamiliar texts, determine the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues, make predictions, draw conclusions and make inferences, use specific evidence from stories to identify themes and evaluate the content by identifying details. Consequently, the teacher teams have collaboratively developed a plan to continue to focus on close reading analysis of text in grades 3 through 5, in order to improve student comprehension and vocabulary development and revise units to include Expeditionary Learning Modules. In two fifth grade classes, students analyze articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) through a series of close reading text dependent tasks and questions, discussions, and writing. The students build knowledge about human rights, particularly on which people have them and how they are protected by human rights. The students completed an on-demand quiz of academic vocabulary from the UDHR. Students cited textual evidence to support their claims. As a result, students are engaged in tasks that reinforce the school's overarching focus on the listening, speaking and writing supports the rigor of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).

- The school aligns its resources to support identified instructional goals to meet the needs of its students as evident in the quality of student work. (1.3)
 - The school's major instructional goal this year is ensuring that there are multiple entry points for all learners. To support the instructional goal, the principal has heavily invested in professional development and in per diem coverage so teachers could attend workshops and curriculum development after school. The principal invested in ENO Boards in every classroom and teachers received training to integrate software into daily instruction. Every teacher has received a laptop. As such, communication with staff occurs primarily by e-mail. The curriculum team uses Google Docs to develop curriculum maps and instructional units that are accessed by administrators, teacher teams and consultant. The school purchased ST Math which is a computer-based program for Grade 3-5, as well as Imagine Learning for tier 2 English language arts intervention. As a result, resources provide students with multiple entry points for tackling cognitively engaging tasks that result in student work that reflects written explanations of problem-solving, closer reading of text thereby increasing comprehension.
 - School leaders schedule teacher instructional team and inquiry team meetings that specifically assess and address student learning needs. All teachers are actively engaged in scheduled, structured teacher teams that use a specific protocol to deepen their understanding of content and the Common Core Learning Standards. An inquiry model is used to analyze student work and adjust instruction to address student needs. Grade level inquiry teams meet weekly to analyze student work and develop grade-wide pedagogical strategies. An instructional coach supports the work of creating tasks that are Common-Core aligned. For example, thirteen students received a level 1 on the English language arts State examination. Twelve students progressed from beginning to advanced and seven students progressed from beginning to intermediate on the New York State English Language Arts Test. The inquiry team shares all information that assists in creating a plan. A Response to Intervention (RTI) plan provides push-in support each week for small-group, targeted instruction. All teachers inclusive of cluster teachers, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and academic intervention personnel support this initiative. In addition, all pull-out services are coordinated so that they are simultaneous. This scheduling limits the disruption of student learning. Consequently, at the teacher inquiry team meeting, teachers voiced that intensive small-group work has benefited all students. Teachers as well as students cite increases from pre- and post- unit assessment both in English language arts and math. Furthermore, the principal uses funds for per session monies enabling grade level teachers to review data monthly and to update curricula units. This work has contributed to changes to teachers' instructional practices as reflected in observation reports.
- The school uses a wide range of student assessment results to monitor school-level needs and modify instructional strategies at team and classroom levels in order to support improvements in student achievement. (2.2)
 - Under the principal's leadership, teachers have further developed their expertise in using data to better inform instructional decisions and continuously increase student achievement. The school's focused approach to on-going monitoring of student growth is collaborative. Periodic assessments, running records and teacher-created assessments to refine teaching strategies are used to identify ongoing students' skill and content deficits. In reviewing student work, it was evident that teachers are expected to use rubrics to provide feedback to students. The instructional team of assistant principal and teachers sets curriculum goals and creates unit calendars that are embedded in the instructional shifts. Staff have

designed pre- and post-assessments with rubrics that specifically target a student's understanding of each unit's content and cognitive demand. In addition, grade level teams check for understanding through ongoing conferencing, teacher-created tests, accountable talk, student presentations and baseline writing. Teachers study the performance and progress of every student through periodic assessments and data analysis and inquiry teams to provide feedback to students so that students can articulate what they do well and what they need to work on to reach mastery.

- Teacher teams use multiple formal assessments to analyze student performance. They also use formative data and end of unit assessments to capture a portrait of student progress. This portrait identifies strengths and areas of need for subgroups of students who struggle to make meaning from text. Teachers adjust their pedagogy and offer targeted instruction to provide students opportunities to use text evidence to deepen their understanding of what they read. As a result, some students demonstrate a better understanding of texts by correctly answering more questions on end of unit assessments. Teachers across grades develop rubrics that help students self-assess and monitor their own learning. During lessons some teachers continuously stop to use multiple instructional moves gauging the level of student understanding of the lesson. Students use hand signals, respond to oral questions with follow up probes and turn and talk with peers to clarify understanding. Teachers then adjust their practice to target students at different skill levels, resulting in better comprehension and focused responses on end of unit assessments.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning with a clear focus on improving professional reflection and growth, resulting in greater school-wide coherence in instructional practice. (4.1)
 - The principal has been leading his teachers in developing and strengthening the understanding of what high quality teaching looks like. For two years, the school has been engaged in the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot and as a result high quality pedagogical practices are calibrated for the entire school community. Each teacher received the Beginning of the Year (BOY) Fountas and Pinnell Reading results of their students which determines the students that need additional support. For example, the greatest areas of need for grade one students in English Language Arts –background knowledge and making connections, expression, fluency, phonemic awareness and making inferences. The teachers receive the data and the administrators review the results with individual teachers. School leaders use the Danielson Framework to capture strengths, challenges and next steps through consistent, actionable feedback to teachers with an emphasis on supporting them in improved pedagogy. In addition, the administrators look for evidence for differentiation, assessment, rigor and encouragement (DARE) and the Danielson's competency of the week, accountable talk, use of rubrics and instructional focus which is multiple entry points. Furthermore, best practice walkthroughs were instituted and a best practice protocol for teachers to assist them in further developing their pedagogical skills. The administrative team regularly provides teachers with instructional feedback after snapshot observations using the Danielson's rubric for teacher effectiveness with clear expectations for student engagement, planning and ongoing formative assessment. The teachers receive the data and the administrators review the results with individual teachers. Additionally, teachers on the grade conduct a lesson while colleagues observe. Teachers debrief after the lesson and share glows, grow, and take away practices. Teachers' state the feedback they receive from school leaders and academic coaches has enhanced the work they are doing around crafting teaching points and the effectiveness of close reading to support the rigor of the mini lesson. As a result, the most recent School

Survey, 96% of the teachers stated that school leaders place high priority on quality of teaching. In addition, 97% of the teachers would recommend the school to parents.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen instructional practice so that delivery of lessons, includes effective questioning, extends learning, and offers suitable challenge for all students. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers use various instructional strategies, such as checking for prior knowledge, direct instruction, guided practice and modeling to meet the needs of their students. However, tiered activities, with different levels of support and challenge to engage all learners in an understanding of the same content with related skills and instructional techniques and students creating and asking their own questions to build content knowledge, is not an integrated practice across classrooms. As a result, teachers miss the opportunity to provide all learners with multiple entry points to the curriculum, minimizing learning opportunities that cognitively engage all students. The school's belief that students learn best when they are given tasks that challenge their thinking is supported by the collaborative planning during team meetings. The belief system also includes teaching that is differentiated, ongoing assessments, activities that are rigorous and contain a rubric and students encouraged or praised – DARE. Team planning has resulted in differentiated lessons that incorporate Webb's Depth of Knowledge, and are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. However, in a few classes the level of questioning does not universally lead to high levels of student thinking. Many students were encouraged to explain the rationale for their responses such as in one lesson where students were asked, "Do you agree with your classmate?" Some other questions were leading and did not enable students to think critically. In a few classrooms, however, literal questions did not give students the opportunity to expand on their understanding of concepts, limiting the level of discussion. As a result, the entry points of some students including special education students and higher achieving students are not being met and instructions shifts are not fully addressed.

- Use interim checkpoints consistently to evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration and curricular and instructional practices based on student needs to support student mastery. (5.1)
 - Teams of teachers assess and modify instructional practices in response to student learning needs. However, a regularly formalized process for when, why and with whom involved with the adjustment of curricular practices is not yet in place. This restricts cohesion of documented benchmarks, and as a result, teachers limit their ability to effectively engage teams in developing new understandings about teaching and learning and its contribution to student achievement. School leaders offer internal and external learning opportunities to build professional capacity and leadership in staff. Additionally, the professional development plan delineates the structure of how learning opportunities are aligned to the school's instructional goals. However, administrators are developing protocols to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development sessions. As a result, optimizing the instructional expertise of all staff is not fully implemented reducing the school's ability to elevate teacher performance and impact student outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: P.S. 241 Emma L. Johnston	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