



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

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

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**George Lindsay**

**Elementary School 250**

**108 Montrose Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11206**

**Principal: Nora Barnes**

**Dates of review: May 22 - 23, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

George Lindsay is an elementary school with 771 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 77% Hispanic, 2% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School decisions regarding budget, partnerships, programming of students, and scheduling of teachers are resulting in progress toward meeting school goals. (1.3)
  - School leaders ensure that all funds and partnerships, utilized to provide programs critical to student development and academic achievement, such as physical education, science and visual arts, music, and access to the school library, engage all students in relevant learning. Additionally, the school has vibrant collaborations and partnerships with multiple community-based organizations that provide residencies in digital photography, graphic design, podcasting, drama and dance, thus offering all students opportunities to participate in the school's leading theme of its federally funded magnet grant program, focused on communications and multimedia arts. Students also have opportunities to participate in an array of school-based extended day clubs, such as theater, keyboard, chess, and tennis that complement a partnership with the St. Nick's Alliance that provides an on-site program for almost 100 students in the after-school center. Additionally, the principal schedules funds for an early childhood arts partnership with Studio-in-a School to supplement its cluster program, hence ensuring access to visual arts for all students across the grades. School leaders also encourage the infusion of technology in all content lessons and for students to use it in their research and project-based learning. Moreover, the principal hired a staff developer from Teaching Matters to specifically strengthen the magnet theme and to build teacher capacity in implementing technology and multimedia arts across contents. As a result, all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have an opportunity to increase their learning by participating in extensions of their academic program, especially in the arts and technology.
  - Teachers' schedules provide time to meet three to four times a week for collaborative grade-level planning. Vertical content area teams for reading, writing, math, science, and social studies meet regularly to plan curricula. Teachers say they have additional opportunity every week to meet as a faculty to discuss the Danielson Framework. Teams headed by grade level instructional and content lead teachers, a math coach, or members of the administration focus on aligning the curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), analyzing student assessment results, and collaboratively looking at student work to ensure engaging students in challenging academic tasks. Furthermore, teachers integrate the school magnet theme and discuss their instructional practices and strategies to modify lesson and unit plans. For example, teachers in all grades use the Independent Investigation Method framework to plan social studies and science project-based learning and units of study. Hence, teachers have multiple opportunities to intellectually engage in improvement of their instructional practices via collaborative analysis and review of student work and common planning in order to meet the school goal of improving student performance.

- The school creates a safe and inclusive environment where all students are valued and structures support their social and emotional needs. (1.4)
  - School leaders emphasize respect and responsibility in character education and regularly plan multicultural themes in celebration of Hispanic Heritage, Chinese New Year or Black History Month, culminating in community-wide assemblies that promote tolerance, an inclusive culture, foster orderly and safe classrooms and hallways, and an appreciation for students and adults. In addition, the school holds special assemblies in recognition of academic achievement or friendship so that all students participate in and have opportunities to contribute ideas, resulting in a common understanding of the character traits the school promotes. For example, students were invited to perform songs and skits celebrating friendships. Similarly, students have opportunities to choose their magnet theme projects for podcasting, visual arts, drama, or architecture. Parents also say they are welcome to participate in monthly Fabulous Fridays, school assemblies, or as learning leaders; they offer suggestions and feedback to increase the focus on school culture. The school's annual Arts Festival is a long-lasting tradition during which all students, staff, and families celebrate the school spirit of positive attitudes and support. As a result, the school provides an environment conducive to learning, where students, parents, and teachers, feel safe, welcome and valued. Furthermore, there is a very low number of discipline related infractions as evidenced in the Online Occurrence Reporting System, thus decreasing class distractions.
  - The administration works closely with a guidance counselor and a social worker on providing assistance and resources to identified students and their families. The school psychologist and other providers, who are also members of the School Implementation Team (SIT), regularly communicate with leadership immediate needs of students and suitable strategies for intervention. Moreover, the assistant principal and several other staff members meet with small groups of students to provide individualized support and mentoring, especially in the areas of attendance and academic struggles related to social and emotional learning. The school also implements the school-wide attendance incentive program, inclusive of a reward system for individual students and classes. As a result of these efforts, students and families have a positive attitude toward learning and the school has maintained 96% average student attendance.
- The leadership sets data driven goals and action plans that are informing efforts to improve learning and teacher practice across classrooms. (3.1)
  - The principal, in collaboration with the school leadership team, defined this year's focus for school improvement around a short list of goals: building teacher capacity in differentiated instruction and improving student achievement in reading and problem solving by aligning curricula to the CCLS. The school initially assessed the needs, based on the analysis of the results from standardized tests and studying the school's Progress Report. As part of ongoing work toward meeting the goals, the school leaders and various teams established action plans that are continuously monitored for student progress through the use of periodic assessments, unit and chapter assessments, reading running records,

and writing and problem solving samples. In addition, the school leaders utilize observation cycles as interim checkpoints and as professional support, with feedback to target flexible grouping for questioning and discussion. As a result of this on-going tracking and monitoring for progress, content-based vertical teams were formed to better drive efforts to accelerate student learning. Similarly, action plans for instructional capacity building have been adjusted and additional professional development for all teachers has been added in response to trends observed in classroom visits. In collaboration with the support network, the school leaders enhanced professional development with topics such as the Depth of Knowledge, academic rigor, and feedback to students. Consequently, teacher practices have improved across classrooms and teachers now plan for flexible groups, addressing identified student needs.

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

- Improve instructional practices across classrooms so that all students are consistently provided with multiple opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking skills and participate in discussions. (1.2)
  - Teachers across grade levels use SMART boards and document cameras as entry points for all students. In most classes, teachers group students and are beginning to provide opportunities to discuss tasks in partnerships, embracing a developing school belief in student engagement in group work. For example, in one class a teacher encouraged students to analyze information across the text through a think-pair-share strategy and then asked them to use question prompts to generate their own higher-order questions, though in another, students individually answered text comprehension questions in their notebooks. Similarly, although teachers in classes we visited are attempting to implement strategies via the use of graphic organizers they are mostly the same for all learners. Tasks with guided questions and questioning during lessons are mostly low level and aimed at recalling or retelling, thus inconsistently attending to student learning styles and needs, and presenting limited opportunities for students to develop critical and analytical thinking skills. Likewise, while some flexible groups and student partnerships were evident, the embedded extensions and supports for student learning were inconsistently implemented, thus reducing student opportunities to engage in debates and dialogues related to tasks. Consequently, uneven application of effective teaching strategies hinders student access to rigorous tasks, extending one's thinking, and suitable participation in discussions.
- Increase consistency in the use of checks for understanding and data from common assessments to determine student progress and inform instructional adjustments to meet students' learning needs. (2.2)
  - Classroom teachers and leaders collect student data from periodic assessments and keep class data binders that include results from chapter and unit tests in reading and problem solving in math. Teachers also assess students with the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) four times a year, use standards-based rubrics to measure student writing against unit and grade level benchmarks, and students across

grades have their reading goals posted on their desks so that they can work towards achieving the next level. Furthermore, teachers across grade levels are beginning to outline next steps for students and are working on introducing peer- and self-assessment for student reflection through the use of rubrics or mid-chapter assessments as checks for understanding. Teacher teams are beginning to analyze student work and identify students' skills and areas needed for academic improvement towards attaining goals. Although grade level teachers collect and analyze student work and results of formative assessments and make efforts to measure student growth and achievement, there was little evidence of timely adjustments to instruction, thus limiting teachers' ability to consistently address and meet individual student needs in a timely manner. Likewise, there was limited evidence that teachers check for understanding throughout the lessons. As a result, identification of and responding to needs of relevant subgroups, including English language learners, students with disabilities and high achieving students, is minimized, limiting targeted support to accelerate learning for all students.

- Ensure the system of teacher observations and feedback uses analysis of learning outcomes, expectations for continuous teacher development, and provides clear next steps as support for pedagogical growth. (4.1)
  - School leaders regularly provide teachers with opportunities during grade level and faculty meetings to discuss the Danielson Framework, and professional development and training are conducted in collaboration with the Network. As a result staff is gaining a greater understanding of the expectations for pedagogical competencies, especially around student engagement and differentiation of instruction. Additionally, administrators worked with a talent coach to norm their observations, and recently modified their class visit schedule so that cycles of observations are regular, resulting in teachers now beginning to receive timely feedback from school leaders. However, a review of feedback to teachers regarding strategies relative to engaging students in questioning and discussion does not reflect full alignment to the Danielson Framework and misses out on providing clear next steps and expectations. For example, comments around differentiation of instruction and refining questioning and discussion techniques are broad based such as “add level 3 and 4 questions from the Depth of Knowledge, but are not sufficiently detailed to move instruction. Furthermore, the school is developing a system to use analysis of student work to enhance feedback and teachers are beginning to reflect on their lessons using the Framework as a guide. However, as these are not established practices, the school's ability to improve pedagogy via clear expectations and detailed next steps to each staff member is not yet evident, and acceleration of student learning is impacted.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: George Lindsay	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>