



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

**Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support  
2013-2014**

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Paerdegat School**

**22K251**

**1037 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11234**

**Principal: Steven Boyer**

**Dates of review: December 11-12, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Paerdegat School PS 251 is an elementary school with 570 students from pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 80% Black, 11% Hispanic, 5% White, 3% Asian students, and 1% other. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions to align key resources that foster professional collaboration that promote the achievement of the school's instructional priorities to increase student achievement. (1.3)
  - School leaders have creatively targeted resources, such as structuring time for teacher teams to ensure that they have two common planning periods that are adjacent to their lunch periods. During this time dedicated to professional collaborations, teachers use a protocol for looking at student work in which they focus on inquiry into an essential question through looking at a range of work from students in multiple classrooms to identify patterns and gaps in students' understanding, and communicate clear trajectories of work connected to the school's goals, such as increasing the levels of understanding of main idea and key details. The principal has also allocated specific resources for "morning school," the school's Extended Day program, during which time identified students receive small group targeted academic intervention using supplemental skills books and digital tools, such as *Tag Galaxy*, to support flexible learning paths for personalized learning. Such strategic decision making ensures a collaborative teaching environment for teachers to "lunch and learn," engage in inquiry, design tasks and common assessments, and delve more deeply and rigorously into rich, complex teaching content. Additionally, to support teachers' development, the principal hires substitutes to cover classes while teachers participate in training provided by Network personnel after which time, they are expected to share their leadership with others to create a productive learning environment for all teachers to support professional growth towards honing their skills and integrating new knowledge into their teaching repertoires. As a result of the principal's strategic and innovated scheduling and effective team structures, teachers have multiple opportunities to intellectually engage in collaborative evaluation of student work and advancement of teaching practices in order to meet the school's prioritized goal of improving student performance.
- The school's culture imbues positive and encouraging staff and student mindsets that result in a milieu that cultivates enhanced academic and social-emotional development. (1.4)
  - Through the establishment of many programs, such as *Resolving Problems Creatively*, the school has established a safe, caring, and engaging learning environment involving school-wide community building initiatives, such as the *Peer Mediation* program, in which fourth and fifth grade students are empowered as leaders and change agents who employ civic skills and dispositions to negotiate, collaboratively problem solve, and mediate disputes among their peers in order to support a peaceful environment across the school. The Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Services (SAPIS) counselor, guidance counselor, and social worker serve at-risk students who are identified at Pupil Personnel Committee (PPC) meetings. Parents report that the school's vision is "To cater to each child; make sure each child gets a quality education in a safe environment while having fun." They also report that they "feel a lot of love from the administration; they value the children and will bend over backwards to accommodate every child's needs." Students

report that there are several adults in the school building they can communicate with if they have a personal issue. They also stated that they could speak to the peer mediators who would help them “resolve their problems.” The school has established a *Parents as Reading Partners* program, which has increased parent involvement, while the ballet, dance, music, drama, gardening, and sports programs have demonstrated to parents that “It is not just about the curriculum and the tests; they want the kids to find themselves and to make those memories that will last a lifetime.” Additionally, the school has a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) “steering committee,” comprised of administrators, related service providers, select teachers, and the parent coordinator. The SEL team provides professional development to the staff as well as workshops for families around a shared vision for social emotional learning, including how to create positive learning environments through active listening and collaborative problem solving. As a result, students have furthered their social-emotional competencies and report that they have improved social skills and fewer conduct problems. Furthermore, students also expressed they are motivated to attend school, as evidenced by the high average attendance rate of 94% over the past two years. Even more impressive is this year’s increased attendance statistics, which reveal an attendance rate currently hovering at 96%. Consequently, the school’s efforts to infuse structures for social emotional learning into the curriculum have positively impacted student outcomes, as evidenced by the “A” earned in the area of student progress on the school’s 2012-2013 Progress Report.

- School leaders, through classroom observations and analyses of student data, provide high quality, constructive feedback to teachers that supports their professional growth and leverages instructional capacity. (4.1)
  - The administrators track their observation data on a color-coded spreadsheet in order to identify trends in teaching practices across the school at a glance. On one particular teacher’s, initial formal observation the principal provide the following feedback. “The questioning was basically ‘recall’, to find support for the main idea. However, questions that were more challenging could have been asked.” On the teacher’s subsequent informal observation, the principal commented, “While the ReadyGen questions were of the recall type, the teacher asked questions that encouraged students to think more deeply.” Additionally, the teacher used accountable talk stems, such as, ‘Who would like to add to that?’ and ‘Does anyone agree/ or disagree?’ to encourage more student participation. He added, “This is an improvement from the teacher’s formal observation.” Such specific feedback provides the teacher with affirmation as well as concrete steps to improve her instructional practice, such as refining her questioning and discussion techniques. In subsequent written observations administrators use a code of “g” or “l” to indicate gains or losses, respectively, based on data from *Advance*, the new city wide classroom observation tool to monitor teacher effectiveness, aligned to the Danielson Framework. A review of observation data across the school reveals a 100% gain in *Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources* (1d) and *Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness* (3e). A 75% gain in *Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy* (1a) and *Knowledge of Students* (1b) and a 71% gain in *Setting Instructional Outcomes* (1c) and *Using Assessment in Instruction* (3d). As a result of this system, the school has focused on supporting teachers in *Communicating with Students* (3a), *Questioning*

*and Discussion Techniques (3b), and Engaging Students in Learning (3c)*, all of which are part of the schoolwide goals and instructional foci for this school year. The areas of focus are used to engage teachers in personalized and relevant professional development both inside and outside the school. In addition, the principal furnished the teachers with a list of Danielson Framework-aligned modules available on ARIS Learn to inform and extend their practice. As a result of driving continuous improvement of teacher practice across the school, teachers now engage in professional conversations with their peers and administrators about high-quality teaching in a professional community focused on shared learning and support. This conscientious focus has promoted self-reflection, meaningful dialogue, and concrete plans that reveal teacher's growth and progression along the trajectory of effectiveness on the rubric.

- School leaders regularly monitor, evaluate, and refine processes for capturing current school-wide data with efficiency to identify trends in order to enhance the impact of policies and practices across the school. (5.1)
  - The principal, assistant principal, staff developer, and teacher teams use data gathered from performance based assessments, as well as student work and rubrics to track student progress and make adjustments to the curriculum at teachers' weekly meetings. The principal, upon careful review of the spring 2013 item analyses on ARIS, has identified the standards on which the teachers on grades 3-5 are expected to focus. For example, for grade 5, he emphasized ELA standards 5RI.1, 5RI.8, 5RI.2, 5RL.4, and 5RL.2, which necessitate students quoting accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text; explaining how the author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text; identify which reasons and evidence support which point(s); determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; determine the meaning of words and phrase as they are used in a text, including figurative language, such as metaphors and similes; and determining a theme of a story, drama, a poem from details in the text, including how characters respond to challenges or who the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic, respectively. Furthermore, curriculum maps for English language arts (ELA) have been revised to include anchor and supporting texts, student resources, goals, big ideas and content connections enduring understandings, essential questions, and writing activities. In addition, during weekly cabinet and teacher team meetings, the staff analyzes trends and patterns from formative assessments and data on ARIS in order to make adjustments, such as revising rubrics, and identifying texts and digital media resources to support instruction across grades. These deep reflective processes ensure the staff's timely revisions of curricula to address the instructional shifts demanded by the CCLS.

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

- Hone teachers' use of divergent questioning techniques and appropriate scaffolds that match students' unique needs to consistently guide their inquiry into complex thinking, cognitive engagement, and increased participation. (1.2)

- School leaders convey the expectation of flexible grouping, student discussions, open-ended questioning, with students taking responsibility for their own learning. However, across classrooms, levels of student engagement including scaffolds to support the needs of English language learners (ELLs) or Students with disabilities (SWDs) were uneven. Similarly, challenging work that compels accelerated students to engage in productive struggles individually and collectively as they explore content, are uneven across the school, thus limiting their ability to advance their learning. In a kindergarten class, the teacher frontloaded academic vocabulary, using ‘tier 2’ words, such as *gathers* and *scurries* prior to introducing an informational text. She then used a main idea graphic organizer on the SMARTboard after showing a video entitled, *Dormouse Hibernation*. To provide additional scaffolds for her varied learners, she had the vocabulary words, accompanied by graphics, on flashcards. She also had a graphic organizer on a large chart on which she entered the information culled from her students after sharing out students’ responses from a “turn and talk.” Students were asked Levels 3 and 4 Depths of Knowledge (DOK) questions to ascertain their acquisition of the enduring understanding, related to how *Environmental challenges can affect a living species ability to survive and thrive*. Similarly, in a fifth grade class, the teacher encouraged her students to analyze science texts with their like-minded table partners as they explored text features and graphics while they posed their own questions on “post-its”. This teacher engaged her advanced learners by encouraging them to write their own nonfiction piece using original visuals. However, although the school embraces the workshop model, in most classrooms, students sat for extensive periods of time before going back to their seats to work on whole group activities. Additionally, in the majority of classrooms, teachers dominated the lessons and asked literal questions, such as, “Can you tell me who the character in the story is? Do we know her name?” Consequently, opportunities for students to engage in dialogue about texts and interact with cognitively demanding tasks that consistently demonstrate higher order learning and advance critical thinking skills are hampered.
- Extend teachers’ use of ongoing assessments and analyses of information on common tests to ensure purposeful support for diverse groups of students, including high-level learners. (2.2)
  - Teacher teams meet regularly to discuss units of study, look at student work, and develop common rubrics and assessments aligned to curricula. Dialogue often involves teachers sharing their findings of trends related to students’ strengths and areas of struggle across their individual classrooms and grades. Although the expectation of school leaders is that teachers collect data from individual student conferences and/or use checklists to check for student understanding throughout lessons, the practice of gathering student achievement data for all learners varies widely across the school. For example, in a second grade class, the students have small white boards at their tables and write their ideas down and hold up their boards for teacher scanning. In a fourth grade class, the teacher asks students to respond to a standard prompt one at a time, in rapid succession, around the room. Additionally, a few teachers

maintain detailed conference notes, and/or use task checklists to monitor student understanding, and some teachers report that occasionally they use exit slips, which helps to inform their groupings of students. However the vast majority of teachers do not regularly check for understanding, thus, limiting opportunities for teachers to gauge what their students grasp and continue to need to support their learning so that they are able to plan appropriate instructional interventions, modifications, accommodations, and extensions to personalize learning for their diverse groups of students. As a result, there are missed opportunities to ensure that teachers employ the use of scaffolds to meet the varied needs of all learners, including ELLs, SWDs, and high achievers, as well as ensure attainment toward goal mastery for the school's relevant subgroups.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Paerdegat 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>