



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Johann DeKalb

Elementary School K270

**241 Emerson Place
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Sylvia Wallace-Anderson

Dates of review: May, 28-29, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Johann DeKalb is an elementary school with 159 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 65% Black, 25% Hispanic, 4% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school aligns resources, including teacher time, to school goals and the academic and behavioral needs of students, resulting in improved student outcomes. (1.3)
 - The principal has organized resources to support school goals focused on teacher effectiveness and increasing student outcomes. For example, budgetary allocations were scheduled to provide teachers with increased planning time and to purchase new laptops and desktop computers for classrooms. Further, to increase arts programming, funding was secured to support programs with the New York Philharmonic and Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LEAP). Additionally, IReady and NY Ready coaching materials provided students with a blended learning experience focused on developing their mastery in highlighted skills which were tracked and monitored for progress. These alignments of resources support instructional goals and are reflected in improved student work, as evidenced by student portfolios and bulletin board displays.
 - Through creative scheduling of teacher time, professional collaborations occur weekly and more often informally, with all staff participating on teams. Protocols have been established, roles defined, and minutes required in order for school leaders to monitor and track teacher team progress in the implementation of Common Core aligned materials and the teaching practices that support them. Teams have ongoing discussions concerning student data analysis/outcomes and the impact on student groupings and teacher practices. Additional scheduling to facilitate interventions, such as afterschool and Saturday programs, provided for increased time on task for struggling students, allowing the school to effectively use teacher and student time to support all learners, via enhanced instruction, resulting in improved quality of student work.
- School leaders focus on supporting social-emotional, youth development and professional learning in a positive environment that provides all members of the school community with opportunities to grow. (1.4)
 - The principal utilizes the school survey and existing programs, such as “Leader in Me”, to inform decisions concerning school culture and structures to support students’ behavioral and emotional needs and their impact on academic progress. Emphasis has been placed on monitoring student behavior and revisiting all aspects of the “Leader in Me” framework to stress behavioral expectations for all students. Additional professional development has been provided as a refresher for all staff. Students and staff also have the opportunity to voice their opinion and concerns to school leaders via formal and informal structures. For example, students created a petition and wrote persuasive letters to the principal to request a talent show and teachers discussed the transition time between periods, distribution of progress reports and use of curriculum materials. This has created an inclusive and respectful environment where opinions are expressed freely and highly valued.

- Student services are coordinated based on students' varied needs. For example, Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are provided to targeted students to accelerate their learning. Specific curricula materials support English language learners and students with disabilities to ensure targeted attention to their diverse learning needs. In addition, the school's Children are Reason Enough (CARE) team, guidance counselor, and other school personnel monitor students' attendance and provide outreach and support to students' families, thus ensuring student support and enabling them to progress academically, as well as in their social and emotional development.
- The principal communicates high expectations of teaching and learning that are connected to college and career pathways, with appropriate supports to enable all staff and students to meet those expectations. (3.4)
 - The principal states that, "modeling high expectations is the job of everyone", and consistently conveys expectations of teaching and learning through school newsletters, verbal feedback, and celebrations. Staff is provided with training and support on the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the principal stresses indicators such as questioning and student engagement, as high leverage points to advance student progress. Teachers are also supported in utilizing data from the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS), Engage NY, and other video clips to calibrate ratings and identify attributes of effective teacher practice so that teachers are able to master the school's instructional expectations. Through formal and informal observations, as well as reviews of student work samples and class data, the principal holds everyone accountable for meeting all expectations.
 - The school is implementing Common core aligned materials in English language arts and math, embedding the instructional shifts, and realigning units of study in social studies and science to ensure rigorous curricula with high expectations for student learning across grades and content areas. The guidance counselor provides resources and additional support for grade 4 and five students, including highlighting the articulation process to middle school to ensure proper matches based on student interests. Through open houses and class conversations students are made aware of requirements and expectations of middle school, including academic behaviors such as organization, collaboration, and communication skills. This system has allowed all students to receive consistent communication from the school about their next steps on the college and career readiness path, as well as information on how well they are progressing in meeting requirements for their next grade.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to align instructional practices to ensure more demanding curricula that is informed by the Danielson Framework and allows all students to demonstrate higher order thinking in their work. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best when they have ample opportunities for discussion, self-assessment and feedback on their work that provides next steps. The principal stated that this is achieved through small groups, student discussions, and multilevel questioning to assess

students' progress. This was evident in some classrooms. For example, in a fifth grade math class students constructed viable arguments and critiqued the reasoning of peers, based on their understanding of the concept of a ratio. In grade 3, students worked in groups to answer the question, "How can we describe line segments that are sides of polygons?" Students discussed shared attributes in different categories of shapes and determined which segments were intersecting, perpendicular or parallel. However, while these students worked with each other to discuss the group's task, in most classes there were limited student-student discussions and minimal teacher support to ensure students were on task. Further, student groupings were inconsistently based on assessment data or students' ability. This limited the effectiveness of instruction in accelerating student learning and reflected a lack of alignment of teacher practices to the school's beliefs about how students learn best, and the tenets of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

- The school has identified several instructional strategies that should be evident in all classrooms to promote higher order thinking by all students. The staff believes instructional strategies such as guided reading, formative assessments to identify small groups, and expanding student discussion opportunities to build up student writing, contribute to increased student success on difficult tasks. Teachers are encouraged to utilize Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and Bloom's Taxonomy in order to monitor the types of questions they pose during lessons and to highlight specific higher order thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis of complex texts. However, in classrooms visited, teachers seldom conducted guided reading to support students at their instructional levels. Additionally, students infrequently participated in peer to peer discussions focused on a challenging task, with scaffolds and multiple entry points to facilitate their learning. As a result there were limited opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous work that reflects higher order thinking.
- Continue to align assessments, checklists, and the school's grading policies in order to provide an accurate determination of student progress which results in effective modifications to instructional practices and curricula. (2.2)
 - Through feedback from the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) selected, test item analysis, and a review of New York State assessment data, key decisions have been made about assessment strategies for increasing student performance and performance targets were identified. Exemplars and pre, mid, and post unit assessments are utilized in math and performance tasks, student work analysis, Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) data and rubrics are used in English language arts to determine students' strengths and areas of need. The STEP data revealed the number of students performing at or above grade level at intervals during the year and the progress of students who have partially mastered specific skills by grade. The school determined that guided reading lessons increased student progress in early childhood grades and additional comprehension work was needed for students in upper elementary grades. However, the use of rubrics in subject areas other than English language arts was not consistently evident and the school's grading policy is not aligned to rigorous standards across disciplines, resulting in inconsistent feedback to staff, students and families about student performance.

- School leaders review assessment statistics and student work to ensure that data from common assessments inform efforts to maximize student achievement. Pre-tests in core content subjects determine the entry point of instruction for units of study and frequent reviews of STEP portfolios, student notebooks, progress reports, formal and informal observations, and reflective questioning of teachers are also used for monitoring student progress. Grade team meetings provide opportunities to share common assessment results and determine implications for curricula and instructional practices, including re-teaching prospects. For example, teacher teams have focused on determining appropriate instructional practices based on student work and data and some have adjusted curricula and teaching points based on this information. Some teachers also utilize other assessment materials to support classroom level data in order to determine individual student needs. However, data from some of these materials are not consistently analyzed to inform adjustments to curricula and instruction. This lessens the effectiveness of adjustments on students' performance on follow up assessments.
- Continue to support teacher development through classroom observations that reflect feedback highlighting strengths, weaknesses and next steps enabling growth in teacher practice across classrooms. (4.1)
 - School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide teachers with feedback on instructional practices. Schedules are created by administration in order to provide consistent views of teacher practice with ample time provided between visits in order for recommendations to be implemented. Teachers have been provided professional opportunities to engage with school leaders in order to re-frame the expectations and accountability of the teaching and learning process. School leaders have been collaborative in scheduling formal observations and flexible in implementing informal observations, with additional visits when necessary. However, feedback in reviewed observation reports inconsistently provided targeted next steps and rarely included reference to analysis of student work and data as a basis for determining strengths and next steps, thereby limiting the school's ability to improve the instructional practice of all teachers.
 - The principal has provided professional opportunities for teachers to become more familiar with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, supervisory feedback, self-reflection and its impact on their work. Specialists from the school support network have worked with teachers to highlight effective attributes in Domain 2 (Engagement) and Domain 3 (Instruction) of the Framework. External partners have supported teachers in gathering artifacts to demonstrate teacher preparedness and professional responsibilities. Professional development, face-to-face conversation, memos, informal dialogue and coaching are also used to provide support in assisting teachers in knowing, based on the Framework, areas in which their practices are effective and areas in which they need to be more effective. However, feedback in several reviewed reports was general and provided limited actionable next steps, resulting in unclear expectations and a lack of tangible ways to improve the effectiveness of individual teachers and thus accelerate growth in teacher pedagogy across the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Johann DeKalb	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