

Quality Review Report

2013-2014

Curtis Estabrook School

K272

**101-24 Seaview Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Dakota Keyes

**Dates of review: December 16-17, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Curtis Estabrook School is an elementary school with 597 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 84% Black, 12% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 12% 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 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school provides an inclusive nurturing environment, whereby effective support for academic and personal behaviors undergirds school improvement efforts. (1.4)
 - Central to the school's mission to nurture a more cohesive learning community, which cultivates mutual respect and care for students and adults, is its opening exercise. Each school day begins with a lyrical ritual that affirms the potential of all members to achieve, both individually and collectively. Students, faculty, staff, and parents joined by administrators gather in the gymnasium or auditorium to sing and dance to the school's anthem *Believe* by Yolanda Adams. The song selected by the principal for its inspiring message promotes academic and personal behaviors, such as resilience and persistence fostering a culture conducive to mutual care and high esteem. Accordingly during a parent meeting, parents explained that their children insist on attending school and arriving on time daily. Similarly, parents also reported the daily affirmation routine motivates their children to believe in themselves improving their attitudes toward school and independent work. Students support the beliefs of parents as evidenced by consensus that the morning exercise is a positive aspect of the school. As stated by one student, this practice "empowers all to believe and achieve with no limitations." In addition, responses to the School Survey indicate 94% of teachers believe the school is teaching the social and emotional skills needed in middle school as reflected in a 90.8% course pass rate of former students currently enrolled in neighboring middle schools. Because the school community believes a nurturing environment supports improved academic outcomes, the school's improvement efforts include a custom that supports an inclusive culture conducive to social-emotional growth.
 - *Capturing Kids Hearts* behavior management/leadership program supports the school's priority of maintaining professional relations that reinforce common expectations among adults and encourage positive personal behaviors in students. Ninety percent of the staff and a cadre of parents have participated in training sessions for building supportive collaborative relationships resulting in the adoption of effective social-emotional and academic behaviors. The use of common language such as the word "reframe" and a hand signal used by a student to call attention to escalating voices during a group task ensures that all members are responsible for preserving a healthy inclusive learning climate within the building. Social contracts generated via student and teacher collaborations replace the traditional set of "no" rules across each classroom. A protocol of asking students four questions cue reflection and self-examination minimizing distractions to the learning process: What are you doing? What are you supposed to be doing? Are you doing it? What are you going to do about it? The implementation of this program impacts school community interactions producing positive adult-to-adult; student-to-student; and student-to-adult relationships. As such, school community reflections indicate minimal and low-incidents leading to safe and orderly classroom environments.
- School leaders and faculty adopt and adapt coherent and rigorous curricula that align with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) ensuring opportunities to access higher order cognitive skills. (1.1)

- Across all content areas and grades, the curriculum integrates instructional shifts aligned with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) such as reading a balance of fiction and non-fiction texts, annotating texts, solving word problems using real life experiences, and justifying opinions with text-based evidence. The school implements the full resources of the core curriculums, *Ready Gen and Go Math!* Therefore, students experience explicit instruction guided by opportunities for high-level engagement. To further support student acquisition of grade level expectations, teachers augment modules to incorporate adjusted pacing of lessons and tailor the number of learning objectives taught during the implementation of units. Thus, curriculum maps reflect time-bound planning for engagement in close reading of texts, collaborative work to complete performance tasks, tasks to promote making math thinking visible, and writing activities to reinforce the use of academic vocabulary as such the school develops curriculum based on learning needs and standards. Moreover, curriculum maps in English language arts incorporate science and social studies content that support alignment and coherence with State and City standards. Consequently, adapted units of study, modules, and prescribed lessons promote skills required for college and careers.
- The school is particularly challenged with closing gaps for special education students, and for low performing general education students. However, revisions to curriculum and the work of teacher teams engender opportunities for a diverse population of students to access cognitively engaging tasks. For example, the mainstreaming of students in self-contained programs and the English as a Second Language teacher planning alongside classroom teachers ensures access to curricula and grade level tasks. The school-wide goal of improving the alignment of collaborative teacher work to support instructional goals and meet student needs set the course for deeper understanding of what students should know and be able to do at each level. Such include infusion of leveled questions in planning documents and unpacking standards to identify requisite skills at each grade level. This work coupled with examining student work and analyzing benchmark data results in modifications and reinforces skill development. According to the New York City Progress Report, 85% of students in the school's lowest third population improved on State tests between 2012 and 2013 demonstrating ability to apply higher order cognitive skills.
- The principal makes intentional organizational decisions that support the school's instructional goals and strengthen teacher practice in order to create pathways to college and career readiness. (1.3)
 - The principal intentionally schedules weekly collaborative team meetings, which result in a shared focus on grade or school specific goals. As a result, teachers have dedicated time to examine student work, unpack curriculum, critically analyze CCLS learning expectations, and create performance tasks that enhance learning experiences toward students attaining requisite skills. Team meetings follow clear agendas and protocols such as the use of Collaborative Team Goal Sheets that result in progressive refinement of teacher teamwork. The school leader reviews goal sheets and provides weekly feedback on the instructional, pedagogical, and operational goals set by each grade team. Collectively, teachers summarize their use of this dedicated time by citing their work as "accomplishments". The principal evaluates the quality of their work based on relevance to the school's instructional goals, alignment to CCLS, and purposefulness of the activity. Written guidance coupled with reviews of student work and team artifacts assure coherence in teacher team practice toward acceleration of desired student achievement. Hence, teachers reported that

collaboration, collective responsibility, and shared purpose for student learning leads to consistency in grade-level expectations. Additionally this year, shifts in teaching assignments based on school-wide data move teachers to proactive accountability for advancing students toward next level readiness. Intentional organizational decisions have led to the re-assignment of teachers who historically achieved good results with upper grade students. A select group of teachers now works with cohorts of early grade students raising proficiency levels toward closing achievement gaps. The principal also funded a writing cluster position providing more literacy support to students in third through fifth grades for improved outcomes in standard-based writing. In turn, writing products have improved across the school as evidenced in rubric-based performance tasks and teacher feedback on written work. As a result, over 60% of student with disabilities meet or exceed the 75th growth percentile in English language arts and math.

- Teacher observation and feedback processes link teacher development to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which leverages professional growth and pedagogical improvement. (4.1)
 - Teacher observations, feedback detailing actionable next steps, and clear expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework indicate that school administrators conduct frequent cycles of classroom observations linked to competencies to improve teacher pedagogical practice. Low inference data in Domain 2 *Classroom Environment* and Domain 3 *Instruction* anchor recommendations in targeted rationales that are beneficial to professional growth as reported by one teacher. Thus, teacher effectiveness is measured by the quality of student work products, assessment data, and formative observations aimed at elevating instructional practice. Trends in teacher practice surfaced during classroom observations determine school-wide focus on instructional strategies and areas for hastened professional growth such as facilitating student-to-student discussion and using assessments during instruction. As a result, new and experienced teachers construct short-term and long-term goals well matched to pedagogical need and closely monitored via subsequent observations strengthening their practice and positive impact on student outcomes.
 - Teacher understanding of the expectations embedded in the teaching framework and in administrators' feedback is leveraged through teacher development opportunities that promote exemplary practice. Through the viewing of ARIS Learn professional development videos and resources, teachers are better able to evaluate their strengths and growth areas juxtaposed supervisory feedback from classroom observations. In addition, individual professional conferences result in teacher and principal developing professional plans to support forward shifts in teacher effectiveness. Professional strengths and challenges clearly articulated in school leaders' evaluative feedback advance both teacher and student performance, as documented in teacher written feedback on student work that emphasizes what both teacher and student will do to improve student performance.

What the school needs to improve

- Build upon instructional practices representative of the school's belief about how students learn best to establish consistency in appropriately challenging tasks and high levels of thinking and participation across the school. (1.2)

- Although curriculum is aligned to the instructional expectations of CCLS and the principal has articulated beliefs about how students learn best as aligned to the Danielson teaching framework such as student ownership of learning, differentiation, and purposeful grouping, there remains a gap in teacher practices. As such, essential opportunities for all students to maximize higher-order thinking and participation via appropriate engagement in challenging tasks are limited. For example, in a fourth grade classroom students navigated the text *Fragile Frog* to make cause and effect connections. This work prompted discussion among students of causal relationships, tiered assignments, and provided scaffolds using graphic organizers affording students opportunities to demonstrate their thinking. However, the alignment between expectations and instructional practice is uneven throughout the school as evident in observations of practice in other classrooms, whereby the absence of instructional support resulted in a lack of understanding of the task hindering participation in a first grade classroom. Similarly, due to a lack of multiple entry points in another classroom, students completed tasks and then sat inactively waiting for the next set of directions. In one classroom, there was good use of SMART board technology, but the activity did not align with the learning objective. Moreover, these inconsistencies in teacher use of sound pedagogical practices lead to low-level engagement in some classrooms impeding adequate development of higher-order thinking skills for groups of students.
- Increase the use of formative assessment data across the grades and subject areas to entrench checks for understanding and student self-assessing practices in order to meet all students' learning needs. (2.2)
 - The school uses a variety of formative and summative assessment tools to measure learning and determine student progress. Multiple measures of student learning such as baseline, mid-line, and end-line Performance Series assessments, Fountas and Pinnell Reading benchmarks, unit and chapter assessments, performance tasks, and student work samples provide teachers with relevant information to determine trends and make purposeful adjustments to instruction. However, this work is emerging practice linked to this year's instructional focus aimed at strengthening teacher team work that stimulates ongoing analysis of student progress toward grade and content goals. While this work provokes thoughtful adjustments to instruction for target groups of students, it is not yet consistent work across grades hindering adjustments to curricula and instruction to hasten progress for all students.
 - As observed during classroom visits, methods used to assess students' understanding during instruction are not firmly in place thwarting on the spot adjustments to instruction to enable on track learning progressions. Despite some teachers' use of conference notes, accountable talk stems, or turn and talk checks for understanding, students do not regularly use self-assessment strategies to assist in the moment teaching adjustments that meet their learning needs. During the student meeting, students reported using a rubric to assess their work subsequent to receiving written feedback from their teacher. Therefore, student understanding is not always readily assessed and appropriately monitored which limits the potential for specific student support and instructional adjustments that aid students in meeting learning objectives and inform on the spot awareness of next steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Curtis Estabrook School	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