

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Louis Marshall**

**Elementary School 276**

**1070 East 83rd Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11236**

**Principal: Yasmine Fidelia-Albertini**

**Dates of review: December 4 - 5, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Louis Marshall is an elementary school with 766 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 91% Black, 5% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.9%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Clear expectations for personal growth create high levels of motivation for students and staff leading to mutual accountability for learning. (3.4)
  - School leaders have established transparent structures that reinforce expected professionalism and provide extensive supports, ensuring faculty hold themselves accountable for continuous professional growth and student learning progressions. For example, morning announcements, teacher observations coupled with rubric-based feedback, lunch-and-learns, teacher team collaborations, faculty meetings, and lengthy individual professional conferences, serve as mediums for the articulation of values central to the school's instructional focus. In support of elevated teaching practices, professional development on Citywide Instructional Expectations promote teachers' ownership for effective implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts leading to ongoing conversations about the demands of the work and the supports available. The alignment of teacher practices to the Danielson Framework for Teaching motivates higher levels of teacher effectiveness that undergird expectations for improved student outcomes. School leaders consistently raise the bar of expectations as evidenced in the 2012-2013 School Survey, whereby the overall score for the Academic Expectations category indicates upward change from the previous school year.
  - Students express that the school has high expectations regarding academic and behavioral performance. "Teachers want you to do your best and tell you that you can do better", reports a fifth grader. Expectations are widely communicated as evidence by grade-level displays of CCLS written in student-friendly language. As a result, during a small group interview, students articulately shared what they should know and be able to do to reach learning objectives. Glow and grow feedback affixed to student work products in classrooms and in corridors highlight details of the strength of their work and identifies next steps for improvement or next level application. Because high expectations and effort are the norm, a large group of students spoke fluently about the school's instructional focus on student-to-student discussions stating, "We talk to see how other's feel about a topic and voice an opinion then [we] compare our thoughts with each other to make ourselves more intelligent". In addition, they agreed that teachers work for them and help them to succeed. Academic Personal Behaviors (APB) are recognized and rewarded via a Positive Behavior Intervention & Support program, namely the Bees Program. Based on a school-wide matrix, acceptable school behaviors are reinforced through students earning a bee replica commendation for positive choices, which are redeemed at the school store. Therefore, accountability for professional and studious behaviors inspires high expectations for personal success and diligent work among teachers and students.

- The curricula incorporate State standards and City Instructional Expectations, including scaffolds that promote college and career readiness for all learners. (1.1)
  - Students' learning experiences emphasize a balance between content, the thinking skills necessary for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the literacy and math skills that will support them as lifelong learners. English language arts (ELA) units of study, backward mapping, and *6 +1 Traits of Writing* complement ReadyGen modules. Coaches, faculty, and members of the network team adjust curriculum maps creating pacing calendars to allow for deeper exposure to sequencing skills, organization of narrative writing, and solving multi-step math problems. Thus, student engagements are grounded in performance tasks aimed to engage in the skills identified as key to their success as readers and mathematicians. Fourth graders who read a non-fiction text on the work of a tarantula scientist then engaged in an in-depth project on spiders with their science cluster teacher. In a third grade classroom, students use the distributive property of multiplication to solve multi-steps equations and support their answer by explaining their thinking process and method using mathematical language. The infusion of literacy-based experiences across all content areas extends the curriculum through an interdisciplinary approach to learning. Thus, this approach to curriculum development increases students' ability to make connections across disciplines and apply their body of knowledge in new situations.
  - Several learning objectives that are woven into a literacy unit support the instructional shifts and lead to students' visiting the same text for multi-purposes. This strategy of reading the same text over several days strengthens understanding of complex vocabulary, increases fluency, and builds comprehension. Similarly, quick checks in math lead to small group instruction in which re-teaching and scaffolds assist conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking skills. Embedded into daily academic tasks are teaching options that ensure lower functioning students have access to grade level tasks with appropriate prompts. As a result of coherence in the delivery of instruction, all learners throughout the school have opportunities to cognitively engage in robust activities that build fundamental college and career readiness skills.
- Frequent cycles of classroom observations and regular discussions between school leaders and teachers engender and guide professional development, which fosters growth and reflection. (4.1)
  - Individual Professional Conferences (IPCs) afford novice and senior teachers a formal, formative process in which reciprocal discourse with the principal results in self-identified areas of professional strength and need. Conversations are anchored in professional competency domains prescribed in Danielson's Framework for Teaching. Subsequently, school leaders conduct frequent observations that provide teachers with low inference feedback and explicit recommendations that generate individual goals and tailored professional development opportunities. The principal and assistant principals utilize the ADVANCE system to review previous observation notes and feedback rendered in order to amend goals, monitor next step progress, or commend teachers' forward movement. The effectiveness of individual instructional practices measured by

student benchmark data results in professional development plans designed to promote growth and accountability for pedagogical improvement across the school. School-wide external and internal initiatives, developed from Initial Planning Conferences, lead to participation in ARIS Learning webinars, training sessions on elements of the Danielson framework, Response to Intervention workshops, and technical support for teachers of English language learners. Teachers' across the career continuum keep pace with the demands for optimal professional performance via opportunities for reflection, timely feedback, and continuous professional prodding that assures pedagogical growth and improved student engagement. Hence, the principal reports that approximately twenty teachers have demonstrated notable movement within component levels.

- The principal makes strategic organizational decisions in the use of budget and resources to support core values and instructional goals as evidenced in meaningful student work. (1.3)
  - A thoughtfully developed fiscal plan ensures the school is equipped to meet the needs of all students. To achieve annual goals of a 3% increase in ELA and math proficiency levels across testing grades, the principal budgets two part-time coach positions. Hence, a literacy and math coach work alongside classroom teachers planning instruction as well as providing small group academic intervention services to kindergarten through third grade students. Due to efforts to devolve monies to classroom materials and tools thus limiting out of classroom positions, coaches also assist with operations such as test coordination, whole school data analysis, and turnkey of professional training. Therefore, smart use of personnel affords administrators more time to devote to instructional governance aimed at meaningful student engagements.
  - Strategic thinking about how best to utilize budget is evidenced in the differentiated support and academic interventions services that balance in and out of classroom learning for the school's target population-English language learners (ELL). Methodical teacher assignments enable ELL students on each grade to receive instruction from dedicated teachers complemented by push-in and pullout supports designed to close achievement gaps. As such, teachers with effective track records or with strong English as a Second Language (ESL) backgrounds receive weekly professional development to hone specialized knowledge in support of bolstering student language acquisition. An ELL afterschool program for students in second through fifth grade is in keeping with the school's mission of meeting the needs of all learners. As a result of the efficient use of resources, student work progresses as evidenced by quality writing samples across grades and genres that reflect meaningful improvement toward college and career readiness.

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

- Strengthen pedagogical strategies to effectively reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best resulting in higher level of student thinking and participation. (1.2)

- A shared belief anchored in Danielson's Domain 3: Component 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques that students learn best via opportunities to engage in discussions, employ accountable talk stems, and when they actively participate in teacher facilitated conversations learning to justify, to reason, or to explain their thinking, is paramount to the school's instructional focus. For example, in a physical education lesson observed, student-to-student conversations provoked deeper understanding of the importance of aerobic fitness and its impact on the human body. During a visit to a fourth grade classroom, the teacher mediated the 'turn and talk' check for understanding strategy, which stimulated student generated questions for furthering a discussion about the relevance of parts of the human skeleton. In most classroom visited, however, students respond to teachers and peers using the 'agree/disagree' accountable talk stem. This strategy intended to promote rich discussion by prompting students to build upon, extend, or rebut a claim or opinion led to a series of disconnected thoughts or the introduction of new ideas without addressing or reflecting upon on previously made statements. Consequently, the lack of effective teacher facilitation of class discussions, the absence of deep deliberation of key ideas, and the overuse of the 'agree/disagree' stem result in thwarted opportunities to entrench school wide the coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best.
- Build upon the use of formative and common assessments to ensure a clear picture of student mastery so that all students demonstrate progress, including English language learners and students with disabilities. (2.2)
  - Teachers use a variety of formative and summative assessment methods to measure learning and determine student progress. Administrators, teacher teams, and individual teachers, are using last year's State test results, Universal Screeners, Fountas and Pinnell running records, Performance Series benchmarks, SchoolNet benchmarks, unit tests, chapter tests, conferring with students, rubrics, and student work to determine academic support services and to inform pedagogical decisions associated with the roll-out the new curricula, and to adjust units of study adding appropriate scaffolds. In addition, use of common tools sparks next level recommendations to students and faculty for improving student outcomes. As such, the analysis of common assessments helps fuel actionable plans regarding student achievement. For example, while observing the fourth grade teacher team, they deconstructed ReadyGen Unit 1 Module B discussing lesson objectives and viewed writing lessons deciding on what elements to add, omit, or revise to adjust their instruction parallel to their evaluation of data. This insightful work also takes into account that 83% of last year's third graders performed below grade level standards on ELA State tests. Nevertheless, analysis of varied common assessments and ongoing adjustments to curricula have not yielded impact on student progress, as evidenced by the insufficient percent of students at the 75<sup>th</sup> growth percentile and subgroups who only make adequate yearly progress using safe harbor targets.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Louis Marshall 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>