

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Bergen Beach

K312

**7103 Avenue T
Brooklyn
NY 11234**

Principal: Diane Denning

Dates of review: January 7-8, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bergen Beach is an elementary school with 911 students from pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 38% Black, 10% Hispanic, 47% White, 3% Asian, and 2% other students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 14% 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 94.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The highly collaborative principal makes strategic key decisions around budget and teacher assignments that support school-wide goals that result in improved student work products across the school. (1.3)
 - The principal's budgetary decisions and staff assignments are aligned to the school's instructional goals to improve student achievement. For example, this year she moved a classroom teacher into a social studies cluster and academic interventionist position. In addition, she strategically adjusted a senior teacher's program, whom she identified as being adept at teaching guided reading and in questioning and discussion techniques, to provide push-in guided reading services to a fifth grade class. She also identified four cluster teachers, as well as special education staff, within the tiered intervention system, to provide push-in guided reading to targeted students who did not progress adequately in core instruction according to the school's Progress Report and item skills analysis culled from the Department's Achievement Report and Innovation System (ARIS) in grades 3, through 5. Furthermore, the budget has been prioritized to allow for student groupings and interventions to meet the needs of English language learners (ELLs) and Students with disabilities (SWDs) to support the closing of the achievement gap. Using Title III monies, she launched an after school program for ELLs in the fifth grade. Another example of astute decision-making is the time strategically allotted to provide teams of teachers the opportunity to meet a minimum of twice a week to engage in common planning and analyze student work. Teachers of SWDs meet an additional period per week in a vertical structure to analyze student work as well as augment their repertoires of instructional interventions to ensure coherence of the school's curricula. Their deep analysis of student work informs adjustments in curriculum units in English language arts (ELA) and math, as well as teaching and grouping of students for instruction during literacy and math blocks, and for Tier I and II academic interventions. All teachers complete Response to Intervention (RTI) 'focus plans,' which include specific plans of action. Teachers also submit results from their progress monitoring and take proactive steps to communicate with and engage families in strategies for implementing intensive interventions at home. This infrastructure of multi-tiered systems of support and emphasis on capacity-building practices, including building staff expertise, being flexible with scheduling, using data to make instructional decisions, and supporting the implementation of intensive intervention, have led to accountable collaborations that have resulted in upgraded percentages of students' guided reading levels. This is evidenced by 90% of third grade, 74% of fourth grade, and 100% of fifth grade students moving up at least one reading level, improved scores on rubric and chapter assessments, as well as enriched student work products for all subgroups and grades.

- School leaders and staff work collaboratively to create a mutually inclusive culture that results in an environment that cultivates enhanced academic and social-emotional growth. (1.4)
 - The school's theory of action to support its deep-rooted culture of mutual trust, cohesiveness and accountability is supported by the school's introduction to the Habits of Mind, the first of which was perseverance, followed by managing impulsivity. Staff members have received professional development on these examples of non-cognitive behaviors, which research suggests are crucial to student achievement, at monthly faculty conferences. During these conferences they dissect chapters from *Leading and Learning Habits of Mind* by Costa and Kallick. They are then expected to employ instructional strategies that model these attributes. For example, in the literacy block, teachers are expected to expose their students to texts that have characters who model these habits, or lack them. Parents are also informed of the Habits of Mind addressed through parent communiqués as well as the school calendar. Students, in turn, are expected to be able to cite text evidence to underscore how a particular character demonstrated these habits as well as describe the effects of the habit(s), and consider how things might have turned out differently if the character had or had not demonstrated the habit(s). They also have numerous opportunities to voice their concerns for the broader community. For example, 18 students in grades 3-5 serve as the school's Government Officials (GO) and have suggested that the school embark upon empathetic community endeavors, such as Penny Harvest, Toys for Tots, and Relay for Life, an organization sponsored by the American Cancer Society to fight the battle against cancer. In addition, eight student representatives launched the school's "Snack Bag Brigade," a recycling effort that encourages students to save their salty snack bags and send them to *TerraCycle* for points, which can be redeemed for a variety of charitable gifts, including providing meals, planting trees, protecting endangered lands, providing fresh drinking water, or they can receive a payment of \$0.01 per point to the non-profit organization of their choice. These efforts exemplify their environmental responsibility, commitment, diligence, empathy, and endurance. In addition, school leaders select books of the month centered on character development, such as, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud, *The Golden Rule*, by Ilene Cooper, and *The Three Questions*, by Leo Tolstoy. This dedicated focus on academic and social competencies has resulted in fewer disciplinary problems, as evidenced by the 40% decrease in student suspensions since last year, according to the Department of Education's most recent Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS), as well as an increase in the school wide attendance rate, which now hovers at 95.3, a .6% increase from last year. Students are also earning higher grades on their unit assessments and writing products, as reflected in their notebooks and on prominent displays across the school.

- School level goals are focused and aligned to student and staff needs, providing clear expectations for student achievement and professional growth. (3.1)
 - The school's goals and action plans are created collaboratively with the principal, instructional cabinet, teacher teams and the school leadership

team (SLT), in response to a deep and comprehensive analysis of student performance and teacher development trends. Goals such as “Provide high quality curriculum and instruction consistent with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)” and “Support home-school relationships and foster communication” are embedded in the School Parent Compact and the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), which address both academic and social emotional competencies of the school’s diverse student population. Teacher teams dedicate time to incorporate the school’s goals to support student engagement as they plan instructional strategies or revise curricula. The goals are assessed periodically thorough the year and results are communicated to parents through school-wide dissemination of progress reports in October, January, and May. In addition, teachers create goals and write intermittent reflections in which they highlight their accomplishments and identify areas of growth or opportunity. Students also set goals and ascertain progress toward their goals, which is subsequently shared with parents through students’ weekly letter writing. An illustration of student goal setting is found in one student’s letter to his family in which he wrote, “This week I learned what divisibility, common factor, and prime and composite means. A goal I have for next week is to multiply and divide fractions. Another goal I have is to generate equivalent fractions.” To ensure a deliberate focus on common core-aligned competencies, as well as social skill development, school leaders collect student portfolios, summaries of unit assessment data, and monthly progress monitoring sheets from Academic Intervention Service (AIS) providers to determine progress and identify trends across the school. As a result of this ardent attention to academic and social/emotional needs, 58% of the students in this subgroup have made progress, as evidenced by increased levels of performance on reading unit assessments. Furthermore, 67% of students in kindergarten through grade 5 who receive AIS have moved up at least one rubric level from the baseline reading unit assessment administered in September to the present, and 71% have made significant gains in math. Similarly, 90%, 74%, and 100% of these students moved up at least one guided reading level in grades 3, 4, and 5, respectively, thus, signifying the school’s success on their instructional foci.

- School leaders support teacher development with targeted feedback that supports the attainment of school-wide goals for professional growth and the improved achievement of all students. (4.1)
 - School leaders support all teachers through the use of classroom observation feedback that consistently communicates what teachers do well and what they need to improve. To ensure efficiency of the school’s goal for improving pedagogical practice the administration observes teachers in grade bands, which have resulted in a deep personalized focus on small groups of teachers to monitor their professional growth and development. A thorough review of classroom observation reports reveals a coherent approach to noting key aspects of Domain 3 in the Danielson Framework, specifically questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction, 3B, 3C, and 3D, respectively. Attention to teachers’ specific strengths and areas in need of further development are prominently noted with reference to the selected framework competency, and specific next steps such as, “During my visit, there was little evidence of monitoring

student learning and offering feedback to your learners. To move your practice in 3D from “developing” to “effective,” please integrate formative assessment into instruction and attend the professional development session ‘Integrating Formative Assessment in Instruction’ on 12/17/13. I have also included a copy of the article, *What are Formative Assessments and Why Should We Use Them?* An analysis of teacher observation data reveals that 83%, 33%, and 71% have advanced to effective or highly effective on the continuum in the aforementioned Danielson component areas, correspondingly.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance teachers’ capacity to integrate scaffolds and extensions to ensure that higher order thinking is consistently emphasized and reflected across the school and result in cognitive engagement for all learners. (1.2)
 - School leaders’ emphasize CCLS-aligned teaching practices that are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, such as questioning and discussion techniques, using ideas from the book *Teach Like a Champion* by Doug Lemov, *No Opt Out*, and *Cold Call*. In addition, they share information marshaled by teams of teachers during collaborative analyses of student work to provide pathways towards elevating teacher capacity to implement more effective teaching practices. Similarly, every Friday, all teachers plan Socratic seminars, where students are immersed in collaborative dialogue using debatable, challenging, and thought-provoking prompts, such as *Do you think children under the age of 13 should be allowed on Facebook?* Although this approach to encourage students to build on one another’s ideas demonstrates teachers’ ambitious efforts to encourage students to be active thinkers, discussions across classrooms are essentially teacher-directed without providing opportunities for members in student groups to respond with possible explanations or ask further questions as they seek to clarify their understandings. For example, in a second grade math class focused on subtracting two-digit numbers, after being asked to go to the SMARTboard to show how she arrived at her solution of “54,” the teacher asked, “Do we see how that helped her solve the problem?” Such questions prompt choral responses and do not invite students to comment on strategies used, ask questions, or suggest different ways to solve problems. As a result, opportunities for discussions that evolve on the spot rather than being predetermined by the teacher are missed, thus limiting the open exchange of ideas in a rigorous, thoughtful manner and restricting the potential for student ownership in lessons.
- Deepen the coherence of varied ongoing teachers’ assessment practices to align key standards and CCLS tasks to make timely instructional adjustments to meet diverse students’ needs. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms, teachers collect multiple sources of student data, including results from pre and post unit assessments and conference notes to identify gaps between current student ability and the skills and strategies required for grade-level exit criteria. In addition, there is a schoolwide focus on engaging students in self- and peer-assessing. For

example, a fifth grader's response to a collaborative discussion, the student described how she was able to maintain her stance, citing annotations from the text to support reasons for not altering her opinion. In most classrooms visited, teachers employed checks for understanding through the use of checklists, thumbs up, and the use of exit slips to assemble evidence for demonstration of student knowledge. However, this practice does not consistently result in teachers using classroom assessment checks to inform revisions to their instruction, such as making instructional adaptations. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to craft immediate student-responsive modifications to address the needs of all students, specifically ELLS and SWDs, as well as to ensure relevant extensions and challenges for advanced learners, in order to engage in mind-broadening studies to push even higher-level performance.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Bergen Beach	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