



**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

THE FRESH CREEK SCHOOL

Elementary School 325

**875 Williams Street
Brooklyn, New York
NY 11207**

Principal: Jacqueline Danvers-Coombs

**Dates of review: October 24-25, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Joyce Stallings-Harte**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Fresh Creek School is an elementary school with 182 students from Pre-K through grade 5. The school population comprises 77% Black, 22% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and % special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers use formative and summative assessments aligned to curriculum and a common grading policy to assess student understanding and inform instructional modifications that recognize grade-wide needs. (2.2)
 - Examination of English language arts (ELA) curriculum revealed gaps in alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Necessarily, the school adopted ReadyGen and GoMath. The school uses multiple assessments to determine student learning needs including pre and post assessments for each mathematics unit, Teacher's College Reader's and Writer's Project (TCRWP) benchmark assessments and performance tasks for ELA. Teams of teachers meet to create common assessments with checklists and rubrics aligned to CCLS and use pre and post assessments to meet student goals for the unit. There is a system of collecting benchmark assessments which are included in the student 'Data Binder'. These assessments are reviewed by the teacher and student. Feedback is provided for students who report for example, "I am working on reading fluency because I need to be able to read without stopping in order to understand the text". Data from beginning of year assessments including baseline assessments, performance tasks in ELA and math and TCRWP reading levels is uploaded onto School Aide, an online program that generates a grade equivalent based on rubric levels per the school's grading policy. The School Aide report indicates students are grouped for instructional reading groups from on-track to off-track. Teachers state that the rubrics set student expectations and posted work indicate use of rubrics across content areas which are normed to the school grading policy. Teachers are reflective about their teaching practices and use student work to review and revise instruction. For example, during a teacher team meeting, teachers used a protocol to review a writing performance task against a common, grade-wide rubric. Review of student work led to discussion of student progress toward grade-wide goals and the adjustment to instruction using teacher modeling for the next unit. Review of the School Aide Reading Dashboard Running Records for 2012-2013, which are utilized across the school to measure reading growth on a monthly basis for all students including a breakdown of subgroups, shows increase in student reading levels across grades for 61% of students. These structures provide data on student learning that promotes improvement in student outcomes and teacher pedagogy.
- The school has built a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment that supports the academic and social growth of students and adults. (1.4)
 - The principal speaks passionately about her 'Open Door' policy that allows for daily lunchtime student visits in order to speak about their issues and concerns. Weekly Town Hall meetings are held and students participate in 'Open Mic' to express their views on topics that are raised by the student body. During a recent 'Open Mic', students noted that the schools' afterschool Homework Help program was not beneficial and that they felt this time would be better spent if they had direct instruction from the teacher. Using the School-Based Option, the school revised the

extended day programming and now offers instruction in the morning for all students. Review of student incident reports indicated that the schoolwide behavior program was not creating sufficient opportunities for students to self-correct behavior nor did it address the stressors that caused the behavior. Consequently, the school selected a partnership with Turnaround for Children, an organization that provides staff training and student socio-emotional support through counseling services with students and families. The Turnaround organization facilitated professional development on content including how to structure student-to-student interaction as well as how to manage disruptive student behavior. Students are referred to the Behavior Coordination Team (BCT) consisting of the school social worker, administration, psychologist and Turnaround staff who review the case and work with students and families to address behavior and provide supports. One parent commented that her child has been having behavioral difficulty which is affecting his academic performance, and she is looking forward to developing a plan-of-action at a recently scheduled BCT meeting. An intervention/action plan was implemented for another student which included a referral for counseling for the parent. Classroom teachers comment that the student is excelling academically and the update report indicates the student is able to fully participate without distraction and has improved academically, increasing performance on pre and post assessments. Students comment that they can go to staff members when they need help and parents comment the school provides the support needed by students in a safe school environment. Consequently, the academic and socio-emotional support structures established contribute to a positive school climate, an increase in academic performance and decrease in behavioral incidents.

- The principal's strategic decisions regarding partnerships that support the instructional program and effective use of resources provide the foundation for improved student growth and achievement. (1.3)
 - The school aligns available resources to promote and solidify student achievement through the development of strong partnerships, expert staffing and programming choices. The school sought a ResoA grant through the local councilman's office and was awarded funding earmarked for technology including SmartBoards, laptops, desktops and mobile laptop carts. Every classroom has a SmartBoard and classroom teachers have attended professional development over the summer. Classroom observation indicates all teachers use SmartBoards in their English language arts and mathematics lessons. Teacher's use of SmartBoards serves as a resource for student centers and instructional tool that engages students in visual learning opportunities. This would satisfy the school's identified need to provide varied entry points through increased use of visuals in instruction as they implement ReadyGen. Due to student success in the phonics component of SuperKids, the school opted to continue with the phonics component which includes an interactive student program which students access on the classroom desktops daily. By the end of the past year, all kindergarten students had achieved mastery in sight word recognition, letter recognition and all students had achieved the minimum benchmark of Level C in reading. Teachers indicated they needed more time to collaborate on looking at student work. Based on that feedback, the principal has carved out focused time for teachers to work in teacher teams on Mondays.

Teachers were able to surface the gaps in performance on the state ELA and math tests and look at the order in which units were taught. Teachers decided to change the sequence of grade 3 math units to allow students more time to learn concepts and continue to refine units as needed. This structured planning time has resulted in more rigorous tasks. Gains in student achievement are evident in end-of-unit exams and common assessments across classrooms.

- School administration participates in cycles of observation focusing on identified Danielson competencies and strategies and provides effective feedback that elevates teacher practices and professional growth. (4.1)
 - The school has participated in the New York City Department of Education Teacher Effectiveness Pilot Program for the past two years, providing multiple opportunities for refinement and reflection on teacher professional practices and improvement. They believe that adults learn by working in groups with others as they share their thinking and learning. The school has assembled an Advance Team, comprised of classroom teachers who conduct inter-visitations to identify trends and collect evidence of school-wide practices in order to deepen the work. This combines with the teacher mentoring program, where new teachers visit three classrooms and select a mentor for the year as approved by the principal. During the Initial Planning Conference, teachers identify what they need to work on and the resulting action plan identifies areas of focus. Advance Team members are identified by other teachers who see them as resources. These teachers have taken on additional leadership roles and represent a vertical cross-section of the staff. This process ensures all teachers are monitored for progress and provided with professional development to refine instructional practice. Teachers report that these practices have led to the identification of teacher leaders and strengthened the professional growth of all staff members. Administrators conduct frequent and regular short observations that focus on designing coherent instruction aligned to CCLS, Kagan cooperative learning structures, and strengthening Danielson competencies in questioning and discussion to improve teacher effectiveness. Observations reveal that supports are varied according to their individual needs. For example, in a kindergarten class of a veteran teacher, observations show review of multiple Danielson competencies with recommendations for making the task more rigorous for targeted students by incorporating sight words in student writing and utilizing peer assessment with follow-up by administration in a week. In a first grade observation of a new teacher, multiple Danielson competencies were also observed with recommendations in the schools identified focus, 3b, creating questions using Hess' Depth of Knowledge question stems. Hence, this differentiation in feedback meets the varying needs of both new and veteran teachers and serves to improve teaching practices and support improved student success.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the school's commitment to providing multiple entries for students and instructional strategies that ensure appropriately challenging and rigorous learning opportunities that promote high achievement for all. (1.2)

- The school's stated beliefs about student learning support student engagement through varied entry points in lessons and using instructional strategies that provide each student with activities that stretch their thinking. Teams of teachers regularly reflect on student performance during teacher team meetings and sometimes during grade meetings. They develop re-teaching activities such as blending groups of students performing at high, medium and low levels. Some teachers expressed uncertainty about specific appropriate teaching practices that would engage all learners. Across classrooms, students predominantly work on the same activities with few opportunities for them to receive specific supports or extensions to help them to increase their learning. For example, in one class, all students worked on handwriting, forming the letter S as teachers provided directions, while observation of other student work indicated that they were already proficient at this skill. In the other class, the lesson plan indicated the same handwriting lesson but students were grouped based on a prior sight word recognition assessment. Additionally, the school has adopted conferencing as a strategy that will enable students to own their learning and provide opportunities for teachers to elevate student performance. Classroom observation indicates that in most classrooms conferring is not a consistent structure across classrooms. Student conferences indicate some students have not had a conference in any subject area while other students have had conferences and are able to articulate what they are working on in writing, reading and mathematics. This inconsistency limits deeper student engagement in their learning across subjects and restricts efforts to realize accelerated achievement.
- Continue to build the work of teacher teams using an inquiry approach so that instructional strategies are targeted and monitored for increased achievement of all students. (4.2)
 - All teachers participate in teacher teams that meet regularly. They focus on identifying strategies intended to successfully impact learning opportunities for students. Meeting agendas and notes include ELA and math instructional shifts and are one of the foci of teacher discussion as observed at the teacher team meeting. During a review of student work, teachers referred to the ELA instructional shifts document and noted that while the student did use evidence from the text to support her argument, she did not always provide sufficient evidence for her argument. The team recommended the use of a graphic organizer as a pre-writing outline that could be tried across social studies and science. While there was a discussion about incorporating the writing process across content areas and student improvement in writing as a result of the strategies used, the tracking of student performance for mastery of goals as a result of the implementation of this strategy is not consistent. Another team has been tracking the progress of student use of vocabulary in their writing and implementation of the Foundations program for vocabulary and word acquisition. Review of Class chart showed improvement of a minimum of 20% in their acquisition of grade level words. While the team is focused on monitoring the shifts and vocabulary development on each grade, a school-wide goal, they are beginning to develop school-wide coherency of the efficacy of instructional strategies across grades. This limits the teacher's ability to readily embed the strategies so that more students benefit, potentially limiting increased levels of progress for some students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Fresh Creek 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