



**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

**Alejandrina Benitez De Gautier
Elementary/Middle School K377**

**200 Woodbine Street
Brooklyn, New York 11221**

Principal: Dominic Zagami

Dates of review: October 29-30, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Lillian Druck

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Alejandrina B. De Gautier is an elementary school with 592 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 16% Black, 81% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% other students. The student body includes 17% 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 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices with a focus on promoting professional growth and reflection, thereby impacting classroom instruction. (4.1)
 - The school participated in the Teacher Effectiveness Program as part of the pilot group for the past two years. Therefore, supervisors and teachers are familiar with the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a tool to support teachers' ongoing development through clear expectations for classroom practice and feedback to improve student learning. Teachers receive immediate feedback following informal supervisory visits to their classrooms as noted in the dated observation reports. Feedback captures teachers' strengths and some reports provide specific next steps to support the development of teachers' pedagogical skills and professional growth. For example, feedback from one of the supervisors encourages the use of specific ARIS resources, such as Learning Opportunity #126, to motivate students to take ownership of their learning, and Learning Opportunity # 107, to guide students in assessing their own learning. The administrative cabinet plans to analyze the feedback from observations in order to design professional development and differentiated support to enhance teachers' skills as needed following formal and informal visits to classrooms. Teachers state that feedback from supervisors helps them reflect on their practices and prioritize areas that they need to further develop. For example, based on feedback connected to questioning and discussion techniques, a teacher stated that she incorporated student-centered discussions in lessons, which increased participation opportunities for all students regardless of their level. She also added thoughtful open-ended questions in lesson plans to support extended student discussions. Supervisory feedback such as this helps teachers improve instruction and make adjustments to classroom practice in an effort to positively impact student learning school-wide.
- The school's newly established student behavior systems contribute to a positive environment that promotes learning and enhances students' personal growth. (1.4)
 - The school successfully launched a Positive Behavioral Intervention System (PBIS) in September to improve student behavior and increase academic and social development. The school's motto, "RISE," representing expectations related to Respect of Individuals, Self and the Environment, promotes positive behavior and fosters a respectful learning environment. Program incentives include the distribution of "I was caught being good" coupons that are exchangeable for tangible rewards, which further motivate students to succeed and engage in their learning. For example, students place their coupons in a receptacle in the main office every day. As part of daily morning announcements over the school's public address system, coupons with students' names are selected to publicly recognize individuals demonstrating positive behaviors. The administrative cabinet outlines effective academic and personal behaviors

in a school matrix that staff distribute to students and parents, and post in classrooms, hallways and common meeting areas to increase awareness of PBIS expectations. Members of the newly elected student council shared their plans to participate in community service and fundraising activities to support charities of their choice through food drives, Penny Harvest and community initiatives. Students were excited that their idea for Crazy Hat Day was selected to celebrate the first school-wide Spirit Day for the month of October. Consequently, students' ideas are valued and they look forward to providing additional suggestions that help build a positive and inclusive school culture, as noted in improved School Survey results and overall school environment grade on the Progress Report.

- The school's guidance counselor, dean, attendance committee, and Individualized Education Planning team coordinate their efforts to ensure that most students are supported well so that they experience social, emotional and academic success. Students' personal growth is reinforced through designated character education lessons in the elementary grades and student advisory lessons in the middle school grades. A fifth grade student commented that these lessons help him become a better student because he learns about never giving up and working hard to succeed in school. An eighth grade student stated that lessons help her learn ways to overcome challenges that would otherwise prevent her from succeeding in school. As a result, many students benefit from social-emotional supports that address their learning needs and enhance their personal development.
- Teachers participate in structured professional collaborations, using an inquiry approach that supports shared leadership, which build instructional capacity. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams meet regularly and use an inquiry approach to improve vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum and teacher practice. Meetings often include using protocols to analyze student work, examining assessment data and discussing the resulting implications for instruction. A new teacher team structure established this school year focuses on the work of groups known as grade bands for kindergarten through grade 2, grades 3 through 5 and grades 6 through 8. Each team analyzes student work across their respective grade band. For example, one of the teams used the "Evaluating Student Work" protocol to describe and interpret samples of students' extended responses, which helped team members to specifically identify students' strengths and weaknesses in writing. This led to teacher conversations about implications for classroom practice, which engaged participants in brainstorming potential next steps to improve students' writing skills. At the conclusion of the team meeting, teachers reviewed a list of suggested classroom practices to address their findings, such as linking word lists, checklists to assess student work, highlighters to identify text evidence and the use of anchor papers to improve student writing across their specific grade band. As a result, this new professional collaboration structure promotes shared leadership and strengthens teacher practice with the goal that it eventually leads to improved student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the use of student data to plan academic tasks so that lessons promote rigorous habits, high levels of thinking and cognitive engagement for all students. (1.1)
 - The school uses Common Core aligned English language arts and math programs across all grades. During class visits, students were observed completing activities in workbooks, notebooks and worksheets that integrated the English language arts and math Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts. However, in some classrooms, students quickly completed activities requiring minimal effort and academic tasks requiring students to probe deeply into their thinking were not observed consistently across all subjects. In classrooms where lessons involved student groups, learning activities did not consistently reflect the use of student work or data to thoughtfully plan for the cognitive engagement of English language learners and students with disabilities. Therefore, opportunities for all students to participate in high level tasks that promote thinking skills and meaningful engagement are limited.
- Refine teaching practices so that purposeful lessons fully challenge all students and result in improved learning outcomes. (1.2)
 - Clear expectations for classroom practice, as outlined in the Danielson teaching framework, reinforce school-wide beliefs about how students learn best. Lessons include graphic organizers, varied templates to gather information and questions to activate thinking. However, class visits do not reflect the consistent use of adequate scaffolds, interactive activities and lesson adaptations to challenge and push the thinking of English language learners and special needs students. This limits the range of learning opportunities that would enable these students to work to their full potential to generate high quality work products that meet the demands of the CCLS. As a result, some students are not motivated to participate in discussions that foster higher levels of thinking and would maximize their learning.
- Strengthen assessment practices so that teachers make effective adjustments to instruction and provide clear next learning steps to students in order to accelerate their learning. (2.2)
 - Teachers administer a range of assessments including performance-based assessments, unit tests, and writing rubrics to determine progress toward course benchmarks across classes and grades. However, the assessment information is not consistently used across classrooms to strategically inform effective revisions to lessons with the purpose of addressing identified learning gaps. For example, in most classrooms, assessments and student work are collected in student folders but they do not include teacher feedback, grading or comments to evaluate the work. Additionally, the use of student self-assessments is not commonly practiced across classrooms, and checks for understanding were not consistently observed during class visits. Consequently, adjustments to lessons as noted in academic tasks and minimal or generic feedback on student work do not provide the detailed next steps that are clearly needed and understood by students to improve their work, thereby hindering the potential to accelerate their learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Alejandrina B. De Gautier	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