



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Middle School 394

Elementary-Middle School 394

**188 ROCHESTER AVENUE
BROOKLYN
NY 11213**

Principal: Guendalina Shaw Pieters

Dates of review: May 13-14, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Buffie Simmons

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Middle school 394 is an elementary-middle school with 631 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 84% Black, 11% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curriculum embeds the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) resulting in the promotion of content area mastery to support college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school's reflective alignment of the curriculum in all content areas to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and/or content standards effectively integrates the expectations and tasks across all content areas. , Growth of the curriculum is evidenced through curriculum maps developed over the past four years allowing students to be exposed to rich text across content areas, and the school uses ReadyGen, Expeditionary Learning Program, Go Math, and CMP3 as further indication of aligned curricula. Further, reading informational text and operations/algebraic thinking standards are instructional shifts that are addressed in kindergarten to grade 8 teams in order to preserve grade-to-grade alignment as well as to determine scaffolds needed in order for all students to produce meaningful work. The school has modified mini lessons to ensure a closer alignment in using evidence to support arguments (Shift 4). The writing curriculum aligns to writing standards 1, 2, and 3 (Opinion, Narrative and Informational), and in math, units focus heavily on computational fluency and developing students' ability to solve multi-step word problems. Teachers require students to explain how they solve problems rather than simply obtaining the correct answers, as evidenced in a grade 3-math class, where students explained their answers and all students were engaged in interactive learning activities that required some to use technology like calculators and computers, while others worked with the teachers to solve real-world math problems. Teachers and faculty who analyzed students' performance at the beginning of the school year recognized a need to improve vocabulary and comprehension, particularly for students with disabilities and English language learners and teachers develop tools in order to strategically respond to the different learning needs of students, particularly special education students. Therefore, the English language arts (ELA) curriculum, designed by teachers, was informed by the decision to teach social studies as humanities enabling literacy strategies and skills to be embedded in grade-specific content while increasing students' opportunities to interface with informational text. In literacy units, there is a focus on writing to inform, explain, and persuade, as well the use of close reading and comprehension of texts to assist students. Academic tasks across grade levels successfully develop rigorous thinking, learning, and work habits for all students. This work in math has resulted in increased student achievement as well as in progress toward college and career readiness. Students in grade 4 showed an average increase of 10% in the five focus standards assessed from January to March. Consequently, demanding academic behaviors are embedded in all units of study that result in students being able to demonstrate higher level thinking in student work products on all grade levels.
- Teacher pedagogy is aligned to curricula and results in student discussion and meaningful work products. (1.2)

- The school believes that students learn best when technology is infused into learning and are provided with “thinking” curricula that invite students to be integral partners in setting the agenda for their own learning and allows for interacting with demanding and rigorous units of study in all content areas. The school utilizes the Danielson research-based framework to deepen its work on open-ended questions that require all students to use higher order thinking skills. Classrooms consistently had purposeful charts around current units of study with “retired” charts in a location for students to reference as needed and word walls for specific content areas are also available based on book studies, and shared research readings to serve as prompts for student learning. Teachers’ instructional practices and modes of lesson delivery address the lessons’ essential questions that supported students’ discussion. Across classrooms, common approaches such as student groups that are no larger than three, student discussion based on direct questioning, opportunities for independent practice, and self- assessment and reflection on class work were evident. During a fifth grade ELA lesson students discussed the book "Rachel Carson: Pioneer of Ecology." Students were responsible for their own note taking and active engagement in whole class, group, and paired discussions in order to further their understanding of interdependence amongst people, animals, and all living things. Students used conversation stems such as “I agree/ disagree” and were accountable for explaining their thinking; “This is why I think...” This led to lengthy, thought provoking discussions regarding if Rachel Carson had a responsibility to meet and talk to the public. The teacher monitored student conversation and posed additional questions to student groups in order to further discussions which resulted in an engaging lesson that included multiple opportunities to access learning in different ways for all students. Thus, the schools successful practices maximize student thinking enabling the school to have a strong alignment between what is taught and show it is taught resulting in maximizing student success as evident by high quality student work products.
- The school leader, cognizant of the unique needs of the diverse community, utilizes all available resources to address the needs of students, families, and faculty, ensuring that student achievement is the top priority. (1.3)
 - In direct alignment with the school’s vision and goals, all resources target student social-emotional and academic growth. Technology that is used to deepen student learning includes Smart boards purchased for classrooms that are used to visually enhance lessons and increase multiple access points for learning. Teachers have the ability to revisit lectures or lessons to support as needed for additional reinforcement. Carefully budgeted and expanded intervention cycles provide small group instruction, providing additional strategies for struggling students. In reviewing the item skills analysis from the 2013 New York State assessments in English language arts and math, the school created plans to work with those students who needed additional support. In ensuring that instructional time is used strategically, the Extended Day program was offered to level 1 students around particular standards and differentiated to meet students’ needs. In addition, intervention programs not only support students with fluency needs, but also are an example of how well the school utilizes every member of the staff to reach goals of improved student outcomes. Further, extensive arts partnerships with Studio in the Schools and New Victory Theater provide the students with

rich learning opportunities that would otherwise not readily be available to all students. As a result, students are working in numerous modalities on creating meaningful work products. Teacher time, deeply aligned to the school's goals, is carefully structured so that extensive collaborative planning and review of student work can take place. Teams routinely review data and student work, implement strategies as a grade, and re-assess student growth to determine strategic success. This was clearly evidenced during the team meetings. Furthermore, in order to support long-range goals centered on teacher effectiveness and its impact on producing exemplary student work by all students, the principal set aside funds for teachers to engage in developing tasks, rubrics, and units of study, which have moved teachers' practices towards highly effective as determined by observations linked to the research-based teacher effectiveness rubric. These organizational and budgetary decisions enable the school to align its resources to support goals that result in an increased quality of student work and noted progress on common assessments.

- Teachers use assessment data to provide feedback to students and to meet students' identified needs and inform adjustments that improve learning outcomes. (2.2)
 - The school uses a variety of assessments, including pre- and post-assessments, running records, Acuity and State data, to check for student growth and it sets benchmarks for individual and cohorts of students that are aligned to standards in all content areas in order to analyze and monitor student achievement across grades in an effort to provide actionable feedback to all students. Specifically, pre-assessment data is used to adjust instruction in all content areas, norm grade level data, and make modifications needed for individual class work and to strategically plan for flexible grouping. Teachers check for student understanding through individual student conference, classroom observation, oral and written response, student work samples, assessment data, and classroom discussion. Teachers maintain data binders that serve as a tool for monitoring student progress and the analysis of trends in classrooms. The consistent use of data results in effective feedback to students regarding their progress toward high levels of achievement. Rubrics, with authentic comments provide actionable feedback and next steps to students, and are constantly used and developed by students and teachers across grades and classes, specific to student work products. Unit assessments in Go Math are also regularly disaggregated and used to fine-tune instruction, as are those for science and social studies using rubrics that are aligned to the CCLS. Fountas and Pinnell reading levels are assessed three times a year and extensively reviewed to identify trends and needs, which then translate into curricular adjustments. This strategic use of data to track progress and provide students with next steps has resulted in increased stamina and improved use of language structure in writing as well as stronger problem solving skills, evidenced in math work samples and writing tasks seen across classrooms. Across classrooms, student self-reflection and teacher's ongoing checks for understanding during lessons provide meaningful next steps for learners. This includes teachers monitoring students as they work independently and in groups, conferencing and the use of rubrics during a lesson so that students can self-assess their work in progress.

The assessment practices in place allow teachers to thoughtfully plan and deliver instruction that is tailored to meet student needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that teacher observations provide quality feedback, and focus on improving instructional practices in order to improve pedagogy and student outcomes. (4.1)
 - Through the ADVANCE system, the Danielson Framework is used for evaluating teaching practices. Feedback from the observation cycles is used to support pedagogical practice and student achievement and results in offerings of coaching and intervisitations. Although teachers receive timely feedback it is not clear at this time if the feedback is impacting student work or improving teachers' instructional repertoire as the feedback in most cases is not consistently time bound and does not clearly articulate expectations. Professional development is planned to meet the needs of the staff based on data collected during classroom observations. However, although professional development was provided in Common Core alignment, teachers are at different levels of understanding this concept, consequently an opportunity was missed to tailor the learning to advancing teacher's growth in this area. As a result, professional development is not specific to the diversified needs of many teachers based on experience and content specific skills thus hindering the ability to effectively support each teacher's development.
- Expand the structures for evaluating the effectiveness of assessment and organizational decisions in order to support and increase student achievement. (5.1)
 - The school has made progress this year in adjusting curricular, instructional and assessment practices aligned to the CCLS. Organizational resources are in place as an outgrowth of student data and school needs. Although these resources are purposeful at the start of school there is a lack of clarity around measuring their sustainability and effectiveness throughout the year. For example, staff collaborates to share student achievement in their individual classes or grades. The school thoughtfully purchased many software programs to support struggling readers. Historically these programs have yielded positive results but the school's processes to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs are informal. Thus, the lack of processes to monitor and evaluate initiatives inhibits the school from accessing useful data to improve learning. Consequently, missed opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of programs impact the school's work to provide needed structures and proven interventions to further increase student outcome.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Elementary-Middle School 394	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