



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

P.396K

75K396

**110 Chester Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Nira Schwartz-Nyitray

Dates of review: March 10-12, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.396K is an elementary/middle school with 253 students from Kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 61% Black, 25% Hispanic, 6% White, 1% American Indian, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 64% of the students enrolled and girls account for 36%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 81.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school plans and revises the curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), integrating the instructional shifts, to provide a range of learning experiences meeting the needs of its diverse population. (1.1)
 - All classes utilize the EQUALS mathematics program and the UNIQUE Learning System, aligned to CCLS, for English language arts (ELA), social studies and science, as the foundation for their curriculum maps. The UNIQUE program includes a profile observation tool to level students, monthly pre- and post- tests, leveled primary and secondary reading materials and other supporting instructional materials. The school's Instructional Guide Committee designed its curriculum map to provide a coherent overview of the units of study supporting the school-wide focus on problem solving in math and providing text-based evidence in literacy, both verbally and in writing. In addition, there is a targeted focus on Speaking and Listening specifically aimed to support 53% of the students who are non-verbal. The units of study are broken down into grade bands (K-2, 3-5, 6-8) and include the focused CCLS and instructional shift, the Big Ideas, Essential Questions, Essential Learning Target and Enrichment Activities. This guide also includes the teaching strategy expected to be implemented during daily instruction. The coherence in planning and expectations of rigor in all settings has impacted on student progress. As a result, all students are provided with a curriculum that supports their needs and to meet the expectation of the CCLS.
 - Teachers ensure that all learners are able to access curriculum through thoughtful collaborative planning based on a thorough review of student work and data. Teachers stated that the review of student work helped them identify skills students are lacking and plan for additional learning opportunities. This ongoing teacher analysis of student work through the inquiry of teachers during collaborative team meetings allows staff to refine and plan strategically in order to meet the needs of all student populations. For example, during a collaborative team meeting, one teacher showed a video of a student in her class who can follow a one-step direction, is happy when things are "in order", but cannot "wait his turn". A member of the team suggested the teacher incorporate "Joint Action Routines" (JARS) into her lesson plans to develop the student's increased social behavior understandings and social skill development. As a result of this work, lessons are more targeted in order to improve student outcomes and foster more focused discussions during cohort meetings regarding student work. This work has ongoing impact in increasing communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Based on Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI), for grades 3-8 there is a gain in the following areas: Reading 32%-36%, Writing 27%-32%, Communication 37%-43% and Mathematics 21%-24%. This steady movement is closing the achievement gap and promoting college and career readiness skills.

- School leaders make strategic decisions with an emphasis on program scheduling, technology and professional development that support instructional initiatives and maximize student progress. (1.3)
 - All resources are used to support the school’s instructional goals to increase student learning and prepare them for independence outside of the school environment. To ensure students have access to technology, the school secured a \$1.5 million dollar “Reso A” grant which has allowed for the installation of interactive white boards in every classroom, computer upgrades, laptops and iPads/mini iPads for every teacher, including speech teachers. In analyzing student performance and work samples, data indicated a need to target student writing. The school purchased the web-based UNIQUE Learning System for students with intellectual disabilities and provides project-based units of study with a targeted writing focus. Computer assisted graphic organizers support students becoming more organized and independent. Students who are non-verbal use Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices (AAC) such as Tech/Talk, Go Talk and Dynavox, to enable cognitively delayed students to actively participate in class discussions as well as demonstrate higher order thinking. The infusion of technology into all classes supports students in reaching their individual goals.
 - Through effective organizational programming, the administrative team has supported professional learning communities by scheduling twice weekly meeting time for all teachers who engage in reflecting on student work products. The teams use a specific protocol – The Power of Protocols, an Educator’s Guide to Better Practice to provide the “how” of analyzing student work products. Teacher teams use this time to share best practices, design lessons that provide multiple entry points and differentiate lessons to meet the needs of their students thereby promoting student growth. In addition, time is structured for teachers to participate in inter-visitations in the use of technology and emerging student to student communication skills. This assists teachers in improving their instructional practice, ultimately resulting in student growth. To support the school’s long range goal of student independence, the school has established partnerships with community businesses to provide students increased opportunities to work outside of the school and demonstrate what college and career readiness means in concrete terms. For example, students are involved in the community Recycling Program, the Food Pantry Program at the neighborhood church and Vocational-College and Career Readiness program. As a result of this drive towards independence for their students, all New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) datafolios submitted included work samples completed by students with “no prompting”. In addition, one student moved from alternate assessment classification to standardized assessment classification.
- The school has established thoughtful structures and supports within a culture of positive attitudes that is responsive to community needs and results in effective academic and personal growth of adults and students. (1.4)

- A school-wide focus on positive behavior supports and socio-emotional learning is prevalent throughout the school and in classrooms. The school provides a collaborative and mutually respectful environment which proactively addresses the needs of students through highly integrated supports such as Sensory integration strategies (i.e. weighted vests), Getting Ready to Learn routines (yoga exercises), school designed behavior expectations program CREST (Communication, Respect, Engaging Environment, Safety and Teamwork). Furthermore, the school utilizes positive reinforcement such as tokens, stickers and positive language experiences. In addition, there is an articulation committee, attendance committee and social emotional learning committee that meet regularly to monitor student interventions and coordinate supports, resulting in no new referrals for Crisis Management Paraprofessional (CMP) and a reduction in OORS reporting. To guide school improvement efforts, the school involves students in decision-making processes and committees through their Student Council. Students spoke with pride and authority about their influence on the changes that had been implemented in the school, such as the new and accessible play yard, updating of the auditorium, installation of a school-wide intercom system, accessibility of the front door and most importantly, the Food Service Committee initiating a salad bar.
- Professional development for faculty, including supervisors, teachers and related service providers continually raises the bar for the level of work expected by adults and students at the school. During one of the collaborative team meeting it was stated that three consistent areas of need have been addressed each year during this principal's tenure. Specifically, to shift the school's focus from custodial care to instructional programming, to develop capacity and build the skills of each staff member, so the instructional team can deliver meaningful quality instruction and lastly, to create a climate of collaboration, respect and effort geared towards improved social skills and academic student outcomes. These priorities have been addressed within the context of Danielson's Framework for Teaching and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. There is a very strong "extended family" bond between administration, staff, students and families. Parents are grateful for the "open door policy" with administration and the daily "communication book" between teachers and parents. In addition, the parents stated the school designed their new report card to keep them aware of their child's IEP goals and where their child is in mastering the CCLS goals for English language arts and Mathematics. The professional development for teachers and parental outreach allows the school to provide appropriate social and academic learning experiences for all students.
- Teachers and students benefit from the observation process that is grounded in the Danielson Framework and allow for the implementation of effective instructional techniques that promotes professional growth. (4.1)
 - During school year 2011-2012, K396 participated in Teachscape, a pilot program providing a uniform language and rubrics to identify ineffective to highly effective teaching practices, leading to a shared understanding of effective instruction as described in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, during school year 2012-2013, the school

participated in the Teacher Effectiveness Program (TEP) through the Office of Teacher Effectiveness, which expanded upon the previous training. School leaders provide clear expectations and ongoing support for best teacher practices and have developed a schedule to observe teachers on a frequent basis and provide timely, effective feedback that is aligned to teachers' professional goals with clear, time-bound implementation of the recommendations, thus promoting teacher effectiveness. All feedback and next steps are provided using the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric to ensure individual goals are met. For example, during the first round of observations, the principal wrote "I observed you ask 7 questions with multiple answers and all students had the opportunity to respond. Many answers were single word answers." "In the future, to improve questioning and discussion techniques, ask students to explain their reasoning behind their answers". The teacher received professional development, internally and externally, including inter-visitations with colleagues. During the next round of observations, the principal wrote "You asked students, what is a dispensary, knowing from the onset your students would not know. You scaffolded the information around real life experiences of the students, allowing for classroom discussions, and then reintroduced the term dispensary again". As a result, during the first round of observations, the teacher received an "Effective" rating for component 3b, while the second round yielded a "Highly Effective" rating.

- Through a strategic analysis of data from classroom observations by the principal and assistant principals, several patterns and trends have been revealed. Specifically, some teachers need additional work in understanding and analyzing data and in planning and preparation in order to appropriately meet student needs. In addition, there is a need to increase in the use of Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) high level questions by staff. Due to this need, inter-class visitation is encouraged and additional professional development is provided both internally and externally. As a result of this school wide focus, the percent of "Effective" to "Highly Effective" teachers increased across the following components on the Danielson Framework: Component 1E:(46%-54%=8% gain); 2B:(65%-69%=4% gain); 2D:(65%-74%=9% gain); 3B:(40%-44%=4% gain); 3C :(47%-58%=11%gain); 3D :(38%-44%=6% gain); 4E:31%57%=26% gain).

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance teacher questioning during the delivery of instruction in order to enrich student participation, thereby increasing opportunities to further develop critical thinking skills. (1.2)
 - The school's articulated belief that students learn best when lessons are differentiated with multiple entry points and provide tasks that challenge learners is supported by collaborative planning during team meetings. Challenging tasks are evident in student work products displayed throughout the school. During classroom visits, students were encouraged to explain the rationale for their responses. Across most classrooms, teachers consistently stated "tell me/show me how you came to that answer". The school uses the workshop model, teacher modeling,

hands-on activities, technology and individual workstations providing opportunities for students to engage in guided and independent practice. Students work in small groups, are provided with supports and scaffolds such as Alternative and Augmentative Communication devices (AAC), Picture Exchange Communication Symbols (PECs), graphic organizers and manipulatives, and have multiple opportunities to practice new skills. For example during a class visit the teacher conducted a “picture walk” of the book “Baking Cookies”. She asked the students “What do you think will happen if the mom puts the cookies in the oven, but does not turn the oven on?” The students were able to answer the “predicting questions” based in part of the KWL chart and their prior knowledge of baking cookies. In many classrooms, teachers stated “discuss with your partner”, “Share your answer with a friend”. Although the school has provided professional development on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge and Danielson’s competencies outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE), in some classes the teacher used only basic recall questions, which did not give students opportunities to expand on concepts. For example, in another class reading “Baking Cookies”, the teacher asked questions such as, “What is the boy doing?” and “What is the boy eating?” In another class, during a math lesson, the teacher held up a ruler and asked “What is this”? As a result, some students were not challenged to meet high levels of thinking.

- Extend the use of assessment data to provide feedback to students and refine rubrics so that all students are able to conduct self-assessments in order to articulate their next learning steps. (2.2)
 - Across the school there is a culture of data collection. Administrators, teachers and related service providers collect and use a range of formative and summative assessment data that includes New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA), Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI), NYS Standardized Tests and UNIQUE Learning System Profile and Checkpoints. Teachers use these assessments and checks for understanding, such as Exit Slips and thumbs up/thumbs down to ensure that students are demonstrating the intended learning outlined in the teaching points included in the curriculum maps and therefore guides adjustments, such as whether re-teaching is required. In addition, this enables teachers and support staff in a case management approach to analyze academic as well as behavioral issues, to develop individualized plans. For students in alternate assessment, accuracy and independence is also evaluated on performing tasks. Presently, the school-wide rubrics evaluate student work samples for Common Core Learning Standards content mastery and levels of independence. Consistently, student work products are graded by using a four-point rubric. Though students had an understanding of rubric performance levels (1-4) and had ideas of what they did well or not, they were unable to identify specific skills in need of development. As a result, rubrics used as a means to provide a gradual release of responsibility to the students and promote an increased level of independence for their own learning is hampered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: K396	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