

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Stanley Eugene Clark**

**Elementary School 399**

**2707 Albermarle Road  
Brooklyn  
NY11226**

**Principal: Marion J. Brown**

**Dates of review: Mar 4 - 5, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Buffie Simmons**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Stanley Eugene Clark is an elementary school with 504 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 71% Black, 12% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

### What the school does well

- The school leader, in collaboration with the instructional teams, has instituted a Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) curriculum to engage all learners in cognitively challenging tasks. (1.1)
  - After careful analysis and review of the results of last year's New York State examinations, the school identified the need to revise the curricula to increase rigor and create more challenging learning tasks. As a result, each grade created original performance tasks or adapted performance tasks from the resources offered by the New York State Department of Education to align with their units of study in literacy, science, and social studies. The school believes that students should experience a level of struggle within each task while purposeful scaffolds developed by teachers to ensure all students' success. For example, grade 3 literacy curriculum maps require students to write persuasive essays and cite evidence to substantiate their arguments. For math tasks students must provide detailed explanations of how they arrived at their answers. Furthermore, teams of teachers meet weekly to analyze curriculum units and plan rigorous tasks related to reading and writing for informational purposes, formulating opinions, and other types of essays to assure that students engage in activities aligned to grade level standards in literacy. The school has also closely analyzed the math curriculum to assure alignment to the instructional shifts, and includes problem solving in math to deepen students' understanding of key grade level concepts. Review of curriculum plans also indicates that teachers plan strategies and multiple entry points to scaffold activities to support student subgroups who are struggling with content, thus assuring that all students have access to the same rigorous tasks. Based on the School Net Assessment data, students have difficulty discerning the main idea, summarizing, and providing details. Therefore, curricula unit plans integrate learning tasks that require students to identify the main idea, while integrating interdisciplinary topics and themes to meet the rigor of the CCLS. The school's emphasis on integrating technology and affiliation with Apple, allows them to utilize selected applications, I-books, and recordings to further support the school's curricula, align learning to the expectations of the CCLS, and increase access for all students. This analysis of prior learning outcomes has resulted in students being challenged and engaged in higher level performance tasks.
- Using a wide array of instructional, organizational and community resources, the principal ensures that programs and enrichment opportunities are available to all students and are aligned to the school's goals. (1.3)
  - The administration ensured that the school's goals directly aligned with the school's vision, and that all resources support students' social-emotional and academic growth. Furthermore, funds were set aside to increase the use of technology to support student learning. For example, SMART boards were purchased for classrooms to enhance classroom instruction, particularly to support students who are visual learners and English language learners. In addition, additional resources to support students' academic needs in reading and writing is offered through the use of Achieve 3000 and Brain Pop, thus further supporting the school's instructional goals. The multi-purpose room was creatively re-scheduled so that students, staff, and parents can access

the room for morning line up, dance/physical education class, and enrichment activities during lunch periods. Funds are also used to purchase software program for academic intervention services (AIS) and acceleration programs to assess and provide appropriate students with challenging individual lessons to increase academic progress for all students. Computers on carts enable students to access technology in the classroom so that all students, during and after specific lessons, have the opportunity to type their essays and do research, thus improving the quality of student work products. Parents are also seen as a high level resource and actively support the school and their children by volunteering in the cafeteria. As a result, the school nurtures all aspects of student life so that students develop the skills to dig deeply into content, and produce meaningful interdisciplinary projects that are well aligned to the school's goals.

- Led by the school leader, the school staffs see themselves as accountable for all of the students. Grade level teacher and student placements are carefully determined by matching skills sets to students' needs. Paraprofessionals provide intervention support for identified students in the morning. Students are supported in their homework, and review the day's lesson for 20-30 minutes. In addition, teachers work collaboratively to support students, and in turn are supported by colleagues who have attended professional development at the Network, thus ensuring that all teachers have access to the same successful strategies learned in training to improve student achievement. Furthermore, all constituencies work together to maintain their New York State accountability status of "In Good Standing". Based on this, hiring practices at the school also reflect its collaborative culture. Though the school has historically maintained a low turnover rate, (3 in 2012-13 and 0 in 2013-2014), a recent retirement enabled the school create additional teaching positions. A committee was formed to address this need, consisting of the principal, assistant principal and teachers. This further ensured that teachers had the skills and qualities needed to meet all students' needs. Consequently, the resulting newly hired teachers quickly became part of the school's committed staff to further support all students in learning.
- The principal and staff work as a unified team to create a unique culture that promotes students' confidence, thus supporting students' academic and personal growth. (1.4)
  - The school's mission is to achieve academic excellence for all children through standards-driven instruction in a safe, nurturing environment, collaboration with parents and the community, and develop students' civic, social, and higher order thinking skills necessary to be lifelong learners and productive members of society. The positive changes in student-to-student and student-to-adult interactions are widely noted, as teachers' use of chimes to signal transitions results in smooth, daily morning meetings to promote closer community ties. Seeking to actualize the mission, the principal has elected to make the strengthening of the school community a priority and a goal. Every morning the school gathers in the all purpose room for the daily assemblies where students, staff, and parents recite the school's affirmation: "Today, it's a wonderful day. I am so glad to be here. I just love 399, the best school around. When I look in the mirror, what do I see? A great somebody looking back at me. Every day, I work hard to do my best, to be a good student, to be focused and disciplined. I learn to be respectful and on point with my school work. I am college and career ready. There is greatness in me, can't you see? Look at me

because.... My history is one of greatness and I know I can do more. I must never, never do less than those who have gone before. I am somebody. I can, I will and I must achieve. Have a wonderful day.” This echoes the school’s commitment to maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes. Celebrations and incentives recognize achievement and celebrate excellence through concerts, dances, and performances to further promote school pride. The classrooms are devoid of walls so pedagogical practices and classroom behaviors are on display for all to see. Students are very aware of how hard the staff works to make sure that they are well cared for and are comfortable in the learning settings established. One student stated and others agreed that being in school is “just like being at home because no one will let them stop trying to be the best they can be.”

- The school leaders and staff continuously communicate high expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and college career readiness to foster a culture for learning. (3.4)
  - In alignment with its focus on the whole child, the school community works tirelessly to guarantee that all students develop essential skills for college and career readiness. Students are supported by teachers, administrators, and parents with an “I believe in you attitude.” To quote the principal, “Our kids can’t be allowed to quit. They need to get used to working hard.” Parents routinely partner with the school to provide students with targeted academic opportunities and enrichment programs. The school consistently shares high expectations regarding student progress in a myriad of ways that includes newsletters, translated documents, meetings for parents about relevant academic and social-emotional topic, easy access to teachers, one-to-one meetings, progress reports, emails, and telephone calls. In addition to the scheduled parent-teacher conferences and report card distribution, families enjoy diversified communicative modalities, and parents expressed how the school “finds them wherever and whenever they need to.” Beyond quarterly report cards, the school issues quarterly progress reports that detail how students achieve in major subject areas, including science and social studies to provide clear feedback about students’ academic progress and expectations. Parents noted that these progress reports “help us know how our child is doing before is too late,” which increases parents’ awareness that the school holds high expectations for student achievement. Moreover, by mid-year, every teacher makes at least two positive phone calls to parents in order to nurture the home-school connection and foster trust. Similarly, teachers affirm that school leaders expect a high degree of professionalism, collaboration, and consistent teaching practices. As a result, school leaders and staff collaborate effectively to share accountability for meeting higher standards of behavior and learning. Preparation for articulation to middle school begins with parent information sessions in grade 4. Further, parents are supported throughout the middle school choice process by the assistant principal and the parent coordinator in completing the application and providing critical information for choosing the best school for their children. Consequently, based on testimonies of former students, achievement at the middle school level indicates successful transitions and continuous growth in student outcomes.

## What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the use of multiple entry points learning activities and instructional strategies to provide appropriately challenging and rigorous learning opportunities to promote high achievement for all students. (1.2)
  - Across classrooms, teachers are using data from formal and informal assessments to create student groups. Nevertheless, students at the highest levels are not always challenged to deepen their understanding in the subject matter. While an English language arts class had students engaged in higher level work by citing textual evidence, this level of challenge was not consistently seen in every class. As a result, student levels of understanding did not always reach their full potential. Furthermore, multiple entry points are inconsistently connected to the tasks and students' needs, thus preventing diverse learners to successfully engage in challenging tasks. For example, in most classrooms students are seated in groups and working on the same assignment. In addition, not all students were actively engaged in the lessons, and instruction lacked consistency in using strategies to support high levels of student thinking with inquisitive questions and overall active student participation. For example, in a math class, students shared various strategies and representations to express  $\frac{1}{5}$ . Students productively argued amongst themselves. However, the lesson did not include sufficient clarity of the math content hindering students' ability to develop a deeper conceptual understanding of the activity. As a result of the lack of content and the inconsistent use of teaching strategies, students' thinking, including English language learners and special education students, are limited integrated with missed opportunities for all learners to demonstrate academic growth.
- Enhance teachers' ability to consistently check for student understanding, effectively align rubrics with feedback, and make instructional adjustments to support students' learning progress. (2.2)
  - The school routinely uses common assessments at all grade levels to track students' progress. Teachers analyze and identify areas of students' academic strengths and next steps for growth. Furthermore, pre and post assessments in each grade, measure students' progress towards goals in units of study, thus ensuring school-wide vertical alignment to common assessment. In addition, teacher conference notes from Fountas and Pinnell, rubrics assessed on demand writing, and the school-wide grading policy are used to capture an accurate picture of students' academic performance. However, there is an inconsistent use of rubrics as a means of assessment across the classrooms, thereby hindering students' ability to understand what is necessary to increase their performance on any given assignment. Some classes use rubrics consistently, and in others, students were unable to articulate how the use of rubrics could guide them in completing their task. Conversely, in another class students were able to articulate their understanding of the score provided on a task based on the rubric criteria. Similarly, some teachers provided meaningful comments and feedback accompanied with student work. The inconsistent use and understanding of assessment and grading practices prevents all teachers from providing actionable feedback to students on their work, and students from knowing what they need to do to achieve higher outcomes.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Stanley Eugene Clark	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
<b>Instructional Core</b>				
<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		
<b>School Culture</b>				
<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
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>				
<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	
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>				
<b>UD</b> Underdeveloped	<b>D</b> Developing	<b>P</b> Proficient	<b>WD</b> Well Developed	