



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Christopher Avenue

Elementary School 401

**51 Christopher Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Deon Mitchell

Dates of review: November 19 - 20, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Mauricière de Govia

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Christopher Avenue is an elementary school with 266 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 4. The school population comprises 74% Black, 24% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 87.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty selectively adopted DOE Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) curricula to make strategic decisions to emphasize key standards in the units so that students are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - The school leaders and teachers have adopted the CCLS aligned curriculum of Ready Gen for English Language Arts and Go Math to improve the level of rigor and higher order thinking in the classroom. To that end the principal defined rigor as “teachers aligning lessons to the standards...using tools such as the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) wheel” to ensure higher order questioning and discussion techniques and demonstrated via professional development charts that as a school community they have bridged the CCLS and the curriculum to establish the “401 Way”. This process considers the needs of their students and aligns it to the demands of the curricula including tasks and assessments. Evident in the “401 Way” are units of study that have elements of the Instructional Shifts, DOK, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), student data, and faculty expectations of teaching via the workshop model. Furthermore, the school’s adoption of the CCLS curriculum considered the needs of all learners as teacher curriculum maps and lesson plans revealed consideration of differentiation of student needs via questioning and tasks that are designed based on student acquisition of the desired CCLS. As a result of these practices, all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) have access to curricula that emphasizes the CCLS via academic tasks that are cognitively engaging.
- Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices measure student progress through the use of rubrics, conferences, and common assessments and they use the results to adjust instruction, leading to increased achievement. (2.2)
 - The school leader has a comprehensive understanding of the value and use of assessment data to influence and drive instruction school wide. All students, including ELLs and SWDs are given formative and summative assessments that assess skills, standards acquisition, and content knowledge acquired before, during, and following units of study. Both school leaders and teachers demonstrated that they are tracking and adjusting curriculum, lesson plans, student groupings, and tasks based on student performance data. During meetings, the principal and the teachers referred to spreadsheets that tracked student performance relative to the standards, and identified skills achieved by students. Furthermore, teachers were witnessed referring to student data and then aligning it to next steps in lesson planning. Teachers shared exit tickets, reflection sheets, rubrics attached to students’ work, and benchmark data to determine next instructional steps. It is through the review of data that teacher teams recognized the need to change the way in which they delivered vocabulary instruction across the grades. Data revealed that teachers needed to front load vocabulary, providing greater context for understanding, and scaffolds for application of new vocabulary words. As a result of these data reviews, teachers continuously review assessments to determine instructional next steps for students. This collaborative effort

ensures the development of a targeted curriculum that is differentiated to the needs of all learners in the classroom.

- The school effectively utilizes resources and makes organizational decisions to address student needs and provide interventions to meet the school's instructional goals and increase student achievement. (1.3)
 - Students' schedules are developed based on their academic and behavioral needs as well as teacher capacity to maximize instruction and impact student achievement. To accomplish this practice, the principal considers student data, conversations with parents, and the professional development needs of teachers. For example, the principal discussed the practice of building teacher capacity in the non-testing grades vs. the support given to teachers in the testing grades. The differentiated approach to professional development and the growth of teacher capacity is one of the factors that the principal considers when assigning teachers to specific grades. Teacher grade teams are scheduled to meet throughout the week to maximize planning and the delivery of professional development opportunities on a regular basis. In conjunction with this practice, funding is utilized to extend the learning time of all students, including ELLs and SWDs, on Saturdays and during afterschool programs. These programs are designed considering the academic needs of students based on their performance data and resources are purchased considering the needs of the students in attendance. Additionally, the principal and teachers review potential supplemental resources and choose materials based on students' needs. Students who are ELLs have access to an ESL teacher hired to teach via a push-in model to assist with the modification of tasks and the delivery of instruction to ensure that they are cognitively engaged in lessons. As a result of these resource management practices, students are engaged in extended times for targeted instruction, teacher assignments are aligned to students' needs, and intervention services are infused to increase teaching and learning outcomes at the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve teacher pedagogy to provide multiple entry points into the curricula with challenging tasks to engage all students in higher-order thinking and discussion. (1.2)
 - The principal voiced that she believes that "...students learn best via inquiry that questions and promotes discussion...students need to be engaged in purposeful instruction that consists of meaningful tasks that meet their learning needs." This sentiment was witnessed inconsistently across classrooms as teachers' practice included and excluded multiple entry points into the curricula for all learners. For example, in a grade 4 class, the teacher positioned the students for a discussion on how to solve a math problem by giving the students a protocol to follow which was (1) Read the problem, (2) What is the problem asking you? (3) What is the helpful information in the problem, and (4) Is there more information that you need to consider? These prompts/questions assisted the students as they explained their thinking for solving the problem and led the students to explain which process model they would choose to solve the problem presented. Some students shared that they used a chart that asked them "What do I need to find? Where is the helpful information? What is my strategy? Solve the problem." These questions assisted the students in sharing a variety of concrete ways in which they solved the

problem. A student stated, "I used this model to show my work." She then presented her problem solving techniques on the board using the chart questions as her guide. In a third grade class, students were writing essays based on a graphic organizer and informational writing checklist which had them consider elements such as "I checked my spelling...I used text features to locate information relevant to a given topic...(and) I indented to show paragraphs." The teacher did consider the supports that set the expectations for the writing to occur, but she did not employ techniques to assist the non-writers in the classroom. Therefore, not all students were engaged in the task, and when the teacher checked in with students there was no systemic way to check for their understanding or redirect/re T teach or guide them through the writing process expected. This practice led to uneven student participation in the task with reduced opportunities for high-order thinking and access to the curriculum via multiple entry points. Student groupings, differentiation, and the workshop structure are considered in some of the teachers' lesson plans, but that consideration does not materialize itself into a consistent practice across classrooms, resulting in limited access to multiple entry points so that all learners, including ELLs and SWDs consistently engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking via discussions and work products.

- Refine the observation process to provide timely written feedback with next steps, strengths, and challenges aligned with the teaching framework to support teacher development. (4.1)
 - The school is in the primary stages of engaging teachers with expectations of the Danielson framework. The principal provided limited proof of written feedback that was shared with teachers. However, there is a classroom visitation tool aligned to the standards and school vision as well as professional development opportunities for teachers on PD Wednesdays. The principal shared that student engagement, planning lessons aligned to the Danielson rubric, and developing new teachers were areas noted as challenges during observations of teachers. In conjunction with this, available observation feedback cited areas for growth such as higher-order questioning, "Ask higher-order thinking questions to improve students' engagement." Additionally, the administrator's feedback to teachers is evidence-based, "Students used a graphic organizer to organize their thinking...", but does not provide actionable next steps that can support teachers through a professional development structure or plan that is differentiated and assessed for growth. Furthermore, the feedback does not provide opportunities for teachers to improve their own practice, monitor their progress, and navigate the Danielson rubric from ineffective to highly effective. These practices have led to teachers not participating in their own development. Teachers voiced that they were "uncertain" how to navigate across the Danielson rubric citing a need for "more explanation" about aspects of the domains. One teacher asked, "What are the key differences between effective and highly effective in lesson planning?" Consequently, the limited strategic assistance fostered through the lack of differentiated PD has resulted in inconsistent connections between adult learning needs and received professional development to support student mastery of the Common Core standards.

- Develop structures that embed high expectations into all aspects of school culture, focusing on college and career readiness, in alignment with the citywide instructional expectations, to raise levels of success for all constituents. (3.4)
 - The school leader communicated that high expectations are exercised in the school community via tools such as the Faculty Handbook; which describes the behavioral, instructional, and operational expectations of faculty and staff members. This guide is signed for and received by all staff members. The principal also shared that school wide events such as Career Day that is planned by the guidance counselor, and assemblies to celebrate students' achievement foster a culture of high expectations for students at the school. While these moments are significant, they do not establish consistent connections between the curricula, classroom practices, and communication to families about improving the academic and personal behaviors of all students being prepared for college and careers. The latter was demonstrated in conversations with parents who were unfamiliar with reflection sheets used in classrooms and who could not describe concretely how the school prepared students for college and careers. Parents were in favor of the administration stating, "It's a good school that wants our children to learn.", but they lacked information about the "401 Way" of academic and personal behaviors that guided their children through the CCLS towards student achievement. School leaders and staff are developing expectations that connect to a path of college and career readiness via systems that are evident and linked through the curriculum, classroom practice, and communication systems. However, currently, as a result of this lack of a full understanding, student progress is impacted and a culture for learning that communicates high expectations is not yet fully established.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name:	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