

Quality Review Report

2013-2014

The Alfred E. Smith School

Elementary 001

**8 Henry Street
New York
NY 10038**

Principal: Amy Hom

Dates of review: October 28-29, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Mariano Guzmán

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 001 Alfred E. Smith is an elementary school with 515 students from pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 12% Black, 18% Hispanic, and 70% Asian students. The student body includes 31% English language learners and 16% 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 94.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

What the school does well

- The school has created a culture that values the social and emotional needs of the entire school community with targeted supports to promote personal and academic success. (1.4)
 - The school's overarching mission is to provide an education that builds accountability structures for all students both academically as well as socially. Serving a population primarily comprised of second-language learners including English Language Learners (ELLs) and Former English Language Learners (FELLs) (85%) and students living in temporary housing (6%), the school has structures in place where all students feel safe and heard. The principal has come to know each student individually and helps guide a deeper understanding of student needs throughout the school that finds a pathway to reach all students with opportunities for their success. In the case of one student for instance who had moved several times in his short educational life and who was having difficulties focusing on classroom activity as well as staying in class, she found that his interest in tactile activities, such as building might be matched by allowing him to shadow a group of architects conducting a study of the school. Through this experience, she saw the student's ability to meaningfully engage in planning, the sharing of ideas, and focused time on task. This experience provided her with access to the student's learning that was then shared with the classroom teacher and building on this experience and through guided planning it has had demonstrable impact on his academic life. Equally important to the school is ensuring that each student has access to real world and cultural experiences that enrich their lives and their vocabulary in keeping with Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). For example, the yearly Harvest Festival provides a rich experience for the community where farmers deliver hundreds of pumpkins that are then shared with the community and become part of a unit study across all content areas, including science. As a result of this pointed focus on the academic and personal development of all students and adults, attendance is 96.6% which is well above the citywide average.
 - Parents and grandparents are well known to the school often for generations. In this close immigrant community, parents rejoice in the fact that the principal and many teachers are from the community. In the meeting with parents, a grandmother attended who has had a presence in the school for 21 years, with much of that time as Parent-Teacher Association president. Referred by all as "grandmother" and recognized as a leader by all, she serves as bridge to the community maintaining close ties between the school and the community at large. While keeping this community, primarily comprised of non-English speakers, abreast of Citywide Instructional Expectations poses a challenge, it is one the school welcomes and does well. Throughout the school, weekly translated calendars are posted to provide families with up-to-date information. On a consistent basis at all meetings, interpreters are provided to ensure that families are kept informed and that indeed parents and grandparents are constantly aware of curricular shifts and provided with professional development opportunities to assist them in supporting their children's academic growth both at school and at home. For example, families including "grandmother" were provided transportation and an interpreter to attend a professional development workshop designed for them by Teachers College with a focus on literacy and writing and its alignment to the Common Core. It was evident when meeting with parents that they were aware of the

Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), embraced the school's focus on college readiness and welcomed the opportunities provided by the school to enrich their understanding. Moreover, the parents spoke enthusiastically of the students' use of academic vocabulary at home, their increased focus on writing, their deeper levels of questioning and the use of supporting evidence in completing assignments which result in habits for college readiness.

- The school designs engaging and rigorous Common Core-aligned curricula, making it accessible while addressing individual interests, strengths, and needs of the various learners in the school. (1.1)
 - School leadership and staff integrate the instructional shifts of the Common Core Learning Standards with the curricula providing students with learning experiences that emphasize a balance between content, the thinking skills necessary for success in the 21st century, and the literacy and math skills that will support them as lifelong learners. School leadership and staff are involved in ongoing work including school-wide inquiry to support the continued alignment of the Common Core curriculum and content standards, specifically in math. This year, the school purchased curriculum samples and is using Engage NY as a web-based resource with grade level teams to adjust existing curricula in furthering alignment. Following a review of State test data, the school developed five goals, three that are teacher-focused and two student-focused goals tied to achievement that underpin the overall instructional focus of the school to look for evidence of oral and written argument in math and English language arts student work products. This focus stems from the analysis of data which indicated that student writing lacked elaboration in the language of explanation. Moreover, it provided the school with the opportunity to build on the previous year's work. As a result, the school continues to build on students' oral language (listening and speaking) development and academic language, distinctly addressing the needs of its high number of second-language learners. This is evident in classrooms where teachers are asking more open-ended questions and providing more opportunities for accountable talk through student partnerships. Evident as well, teachers have developed routines and supports for children to tackle complex text through close reading. To ensure alignment across classrooms, the school is working with outside resources including two staff developers from Teachers College, an Aussie consultant that works with the inquiry team study, and Metamorphosis that works specifically on extended responses in math with each grade. Identifying that the existing math curricula did not offer enough word problems, teachers and leadership prepared for their work with Metamorphosis by working during the summer to identify and incorporate additional support and resources for the math curriculum that would both build math language and expose students to multistep problems. Metamorphosis has focused its work on lesson study with each grade while modeling revisions that further align the work of the school to the Common Core. Additionally, '10 minute math', as a quick practice, has been incorporated throughout the school. At grade team meetings, academic tasks and curricular refinement are driven by a constant analysis of student work with a specific lens of how to meet the needs of the English language learners (ELL) and Former English language learners (FELL) who constitute the majority of the student population. At these meetings, an ELL specialist often joins to assist in designing lesson scaffolds after reviewing and often adapting existing rubrics to include language development. Emphasis on the needs of ELL students and special needs students is evident throughout the curricula. Classroom lessons through questioning demand that students use academic vocabulary when responding, which results in elevated levels of

student work as evidenced in classrooms and posted student projects for all students.

- The school's set of beliefs about how students learn best informs teacher pedagogy which results in student growth and meaningful student work products. (1.2)
 - Having had the opportunity of serving as a pilot school, the majority of classrooms reflect coherence with the Danielson Framework with demonstrable evidence of a focus on questioning. With guided support from the principal, assistant principal and coaches throughout the school lessons are planned with grade level expectations while providing multiple opportunities for all learners to engage with tasks and resources that are developmentally appropriate. For example, with the support of Metamorphosis, this math curriculum and pacing guide provides teachers with tiered lessons so that all learners including English language learners and special education students are engaged in challenging tasks based on their levels. Individual student growth is tracked and is used to shape lessons that engage students across grades in on-level lessons, with scaffolds to advance learning for students in need. In literacy, across classrooms, teachers follow a workshop model where teachers provide a mini lesson, students engage in differentiated group work, followed by a share out to assess mastery and check for understanding. Developing the language needs of the English language learners is a pronounced focus of each classroom with opportunities designed to develop oral language through constant engagement and speaking heard throughout classrooms. Thinking templates are used to support English language learners with the embedded understanding that voice counts—they have something to share, and need support to unpack their expressions and opinions. Process charts throughout the room with individual copies available to each student continuously support this work. Lesson plans often reflect differentiated work for individual student needs as an example of the deliberate attention to this school's large population of second-language learners. The school's focused work is evidenced in its most recent Progress Grade of B and its percentile ranking of 58%, a significant gain from the previous year Progress Grade of C and its percentile ranking of 48%.
- The school effectively uses a range of assessment data that guides student grouping decisions and informs planning, resulting in a clear understanding of the performance of learners. (2.2)
 - Student data information is maintained by all teachers and formative measures including performance tasks and acuity results are entered in TC Assessment Pro and ARIS. Conferencing notes, running records and rubrics for writing performance tasks are aligned with the school's key standards and curriculum and augment test results by helping teachers identify students who may be struggling and need further differentiated guidance and instruction. In classrooms, it is not unusual to see students with individualized thinking and process charts as well as graphic organizers designed to address their challenge. School leadership collects and analyzes classroom data to review student performance and progress and explore patterns and trends especially for students who have been identified as lagging behind and in need of additional support. These students comprise a cohort supported through extended day and Saturday remedial and enrichment activities. During weekly teacher planning meetings, frequently attended by principal and

assistant principal, teachers across the grades review student work products using rubrics adapted through guidance from special education and English language learner coaches to design strategies and target support interventions that are then instituted in classrooms. Teacher teams also use assessment data to further their inquiry work in math. This work began last year with a deep analysis of NY State math test results, particularly math writing for the lowest third subgroups. The culminating activity for the study was a presentation by all teacher teams. Teachers visited each other's classrooms and shared student data and changes in teacher practice resulting from these math inquiry studies. This focus on math allowed the teachers to see growth in the way students use and represent their math thinking, emphasizing the use of precise mathematical language. Furthermore, teachers adjusted their teaching practice to include more explicit modeling of expectations and many now plan for differentiation in math. This work continues this year and now includes a look at a vertical strand of how complex number strings can be taught from grades K through 5. In looking at and analyzing student work the school has connected writing and math as part of its periodic assessments, resulting in much richer student writing with thoughtful revisions that reflect enriched vocabulary and deeper levels of analysis of text. As a result of this ongoing work, the school showed gains in New York State math results for English language learners, self-contained, special education students and Black and Hispanic males in the lowest third citywide.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the frequency of teacher feedback so that pedagogy is regularly discussed among administration and teachers, resulting in tailored professional development to further adult learning across the school. (4.1)
 - Having participated in the Danielson pilot, teachers are well familiar with this research-based rubric as a method of observing their work, gauging its effectiveness, and receiving feedback. Early in the year, the principal and assistant principal visited classrooms together to calibrate their observations and the feedback provided to teachers. Immediate, verbal feedback is provided to teachers with written feedback then entered in Advance. While the feedback aims to support specific teacher development, especially for those new to the practice, it is not currently used strategically to identify school-wide patterns or trends that can benefit from professional development and goal-setting across grades. For example, while many teachers include differentiated and targeted strategies to scaffold lessons for subgroups and these practices are discussed at grade level team meetings, the opportunity to share these practices across grades through teacher-initiated professional development, intervisitations and cross-grade meetings is not widely practiced. This limits the school's ability to more effectively scaffold best practices across grades especially in serving ELL or F-ELL students.
- Formalize systems which capture the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction and accountability structures to ensure maximum utility in vertical planning and provide opportunities to share practices with the broader community. (5.1)
 - School leadership provides time for grade planning to occur on a weekly basis. These teams are joined by out-of-classroom teachers as well as specialists to provide thoughtful analysis of student work and strategies for intervention and shifts in practice. Off site coaches

frequently join these teams to further discussions that support differentiated strategies for individual learners. While leadership has designed this planning to develop consistency throughout the school, it has not effectively implemented a system that allows for vertical planning across grades with a distinct look at curricular revisions and appropriate scaffolds. This results in missed opportunities to create coherence across the school specifically when making adjustments to curricula thus hampering student learning.

- The school has an abundance of activities that engage families and keep the immediate school community informed regarding citywide instructional expectations. However, the school lacks full faculty buy-in to truly reflect the full engagement of all stakeholders. The school has not yet considered ways to further engage staff in the collaborative planning and execution of curricular decisions. Although there are lead teacher on school teams, there are no formal structures for them to meet with the school leadership on a regular basis, thus minimizing their role in instructional decision-making.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Alfred E. Smith School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	

Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly...	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

To what extent does the school...	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

To what extent does the school...	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
----	----------------	---	------------	---	------------	----	----------------