

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Lillie D. Blake Elementary School

M006

**45 East 81st Street
Manhattan
NY 10028**

Principal: Lauren Fontana

Dates of review: October 22 - 23 , 2013

Lead Reviewer: Victoria Armas

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Lillie D. Blake is an elementary school with 782 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 10% Hispanic, 71% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 15% 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 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers routinely plan and effectively refine units of study aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that ensure student engagement and promote coherence across grades. (1.1)
 - The school use of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) curriculum for English language arts (ELA), and the Technical Education Research Centers (TERC) math curriculum, supplemented by Singapore Math, Math in the City, and teacher created materials, provide exposure to rigorous tasks and materials. Additionally, the school strategically incorporates the instructional shifts across grades, by requiring students to cite evidence from texts, and in the use of a balance of informational and literary texts in ELA. In math the shifts of focusing on fluency, providing deep understanding of concepts, and application to real world problems were explicit. This was evidenced in the grade 2 pacing calendar for the unit on investigations in number, data, and space, with applications to money and telling time, a real world application, that also connects to the number and operation in base 10 math standard ensuring an understanding of three digit numbers and their representation, thus promoting rigor in planning. The Reading Reform program in the lower grades supports improved reading levels, which resulted in 64% of kindergarten students reading above grade level in June 2013. Furthermore, teacher teams utilize a template for ELA to plan lessons that articulates the learning progression on informational writing that includes characteristics of structure and the development and language conventions across grade levels, resulting in coherence school wide and promoting college and career readiness.
 - Teachers ensure that all learners are able to access curriculum through thoughtful collaborative planning based on a thorough review of student work and data. School leaders and coaches in math and ELA support teacher work to unpack findings in assessments. Through item analysis, staff refine curricula to determine student performance and then plan strategically in order to meet the needs of all student populations. Furthermore, according to individual proficiency levels relative to differentiated tasks and texts, lesson plans include student groupings. Fourth grade teachers adjusted the math curriculum to include more support on multi-step word problems that included remainders in division based on a pre- and post-test analysis of student work. Lesson plans included student groupings according to proficiency with differentiated tasks and texts that engage all learners. Additionally, supports for students are extended by including parents in math and ELA morning meetings where they are provided with strategies to further support their children's understanding of concepts, ensuring engagement and greater access to curricula.
- The school leaders make strategic decisions regarding staffing assignments and the use of resources that support instructional goals and ensure high levels of student achievement. (1.3)
 - The school engages in a variety of partnerships that provide grade specific special activities aligned to curricula that are scheduled strategically to

complement other special content area offerings throughout the school year, promoting student achievement through high levels of engagement as well as the nurturing of interests and talents. Stages of Learning supports the production of a Shakespeare play in the fifth grade, Dancing Classrooms provides ballroom dancing in the fourth grade, Vital Theater in the third grade, National Dance Institute for second graders, and exposure to drumming for first graders through Arts Connection. In addition, art therapy that is provided through a grant with New York University promotes opportunities for students to use art as a means to work through social emotional issues. Furthermore, the school continues to focus on continual technology upgrades. The purchase of an iPad cart, Safari Montage used to access video clips that support alignment to CCLS tasks, the E-Chalk website that provides weekly newsletters and calendars for parents and the broader school community, and a private website for teachers to share curricular materials and ideas, promote school-wide communication and support for the school's instructional goals.

- Full time ELA and math coaches support teachers to implement next steps identified during classroom observations, resulting in effective instruction, and the school's additional guidance counselor addresses the needs of students' social emotional issues. The school also hires a number of assistant teachers to further support classroom teachers by working with students and collaborating to develop instructional plans. Additionally, a second Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teacher was hired to further support students requiring this mandate, as well as to provide additional time to support at-risk students in need of intervention, resulting in more students meeting grade level standards, and special education students able to meet Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals.
- The school has established thoughtful structures and supports within in 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 pupil personnel team, attendance committee, and social emotional learning committee, meet regularly during each month to monitor student interventions, and coordinate supports, resulting in a decrease in the referral rate for special education services. Notably, students indicated that they are comfortable talking to their teachers about issues of any nature, as evidenced by the provision of special supports for particular groups of students. These include Banana Splits for families facing separation or divorce, Bull Pen for boys who have issues expressing themselves, and Candy Apples for students who have been adopted, all of which promote skills in communication, confidence, and coping, that further academic and personal behaviors, and as students indicated increases their ability to comfortably talk to their teachers around personal issues.
 - A parent facing a difficult situation expressed that “there is more support here than anywhere” and indicated that the school delivered meals to her family, allowed her children to stay with the teacher during lunch periods, and provided art therapy for them. Additionally, the Parents as Learning Partners program, with a 95% participation rate, invites families to engage with their children in lessons during the regular school day and they provide a take-home extension activity to transfer and further promote student learning and engagement and create a home-school connection. Furthermore, professional development by a consultant is provided for teachers and parents on conflict resolution, and the initiation of a peer mediation team of students

helps to monitor student behavior during recess and supports responding to issues that arise during that time. This work is extended to the consultant working with students on anti-bullying concepts and strategies, resulting in a school environment that is orderly, respectful, and conducive to learning.

- The school's assessment practices are well aligned to curricula and standards, resulting in effective adjustments to instruction to meet learning needs, as well as actionable feedback to students. (2.2).
 - The school's pre- and post-assessments in content areas are disaggregated and analyzed by teacher teams to form student groupings and adapt curricula to address individual learning needs in order to support mastery. Students create and reflect upon goals regularly, individually and during student-teacher conferencing, in order to further refine their goals to address next steps in learning. Post-it notes are evidenced on student writing, in portfolios, and on student work posted on bulletin boards inside and outside classrooms, indicating strengths and noticings according to rubrics, mirroring a school wide focus on reflection. Furthermore teachers regularly send home student work samples which include a note on the student's strengths in the piece and next step goals, providing meaningful feedback to families with a clear understanding of student achievement. A work sample for second graders included such strengths as writes sequentially, and includes some dialogue and feelings, with a goal to stretch out important parts by describing small actions. Additionally, the school re-designed their report card to reflect CCLS and Progress Report (PR) terminology in order to provide a well-defined picture of student progress toward grade level goals.
 - Students consistently self-assess on rubrics that include grade level CCLS expectations for the grade level above and below. Checklists and rubrics are student friendly for the early grades and special populations, including icons and pictures in order to orient students on the expected outcomes. Throughout lessons teachers monitor student understanding in a variety of methods including thumbs up, stop-and-jot, and the use of electronic student response devices. Teacher teams continually monitor reading levels and achievement on common assessments in content areas to track student growth and make effective adjustments to plans yielding strong improvement in the school's PR, resulting in a change in progress from a C in 2012 to an A in 2013.
- The school purposefully supports the development of teacher practice through the strategic use of frequent cycles of classroom observation and ongoing analysis of student work in order to promote professional growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders have developed a schedule to observe teachers on a frequent basis and provide timely, effective feedback that is aligned to teacher professional goals with clear, time-bound implementation of the recommendations, thus promoting teacher effectiveness. Student work produced during the lessons observed is referred to in written observation reports, and referenced in notes by school leaders along with supports and suggestions. This information is shared with teachers, including how to further improve outcomes, usually on Fridays, which school leaders have set aside to debrief with teachers and write reports. Professional development at the beginning of the school year is focused on norming activities for teachers and administrators by using videos to align understanding as to the expectations

relative to levels and competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teachers. In addition, the ELA and math coaches, mentor teachers, and teacher team collaborations support new teachers. One new teacher remarked, "Everything about teaching has been impacted by the teacher team. Lessons taught more than once were exponentially better when discussed with the team." Additionally highly effective teachers are provided with opportunities to present professional learning workshops at Teachers' College and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), resulting in their own professional growth, the sharing of exemplary school wide practices to a broader audience, in addition to the sharing of best practice with their colleagues.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance instruction to ensure teachers strategically provide multiple entry points in lessons to engage students in challenging tasks, discussions that promote critical thinking, and ownership of their learning. (1.2)
 - Across the classrooms observed, lessons were provided that are consistently organized according to the workshop model with clear mini-lessons that connect learning to previous concepts and engage students in active involvement. Accountable talk is frequently utilized, in addition to hands-on activities, teacher modeling, and the use of technology to present information and provide assessment opportunities. Rationales for grouping of students and student-teacher conferencing were articulated by teachers verbally and in lesson plans. Differentiation was noted in various forms including leveled texts, differing rubrics and tasks. This was evidenced in a fourth grade writing workshop where students utilized a differentiated narrative checklist according to student proficiency that included the standards for structure, development, and language conventions across four grade levels from grades 2 through 5. The checklists included two grade levels at a time, and were assigned to individual partnerships according to learning levels to reflect on their writing and set new goals in order to continue to grow. Although the provision of multiple entry points is consistent across classrooms, supports and extension, particularly for higher achievers are not fully evident, thus precluding students from engaging in tasks that are sufficiently challenging to impact even higher levels of achievement, beyond grade level expectations.
 - Students engaged in conversations and activities during lessons that reflect critical thinking and participation. In a fifth grade science class students discussed the variables that could impact how a boat could remain afloat or sink. In a first grade ELA lesson students had partnered conversations about what they found in their independent reading that was surprising while providing proof from the story for that noticing. Student work products also show high levels of student thinking as evident in the second grade social studies unit on New York City in which students plan and design a city accompanied by the creation of a scale model. Although student work products and discussions reflect critical thinking and engagement, students indicated that opportunities to choose what they will study is limited to the selection of topics for writing, hindering students to take more comprehensive ownership of their learning across all content areas.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Lillie D. Blake Elementary School	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