

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Chelsea Prep Academy**

**M033**

**281 Ninth Avenue  
Manhattan  
NY 10001**

**Principal: Linore Lindy**

**Dates of review: October 24 - 25, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Chelsea Prep Academy is an elementary school with 516 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 13% Black, 30% Hispanic, 24% White, 25% Asian and 6% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well-developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school strategically integrates higher order thinking learning tasks across the curricula and routinely refines learning tasks to engage all students. (1.1)
  - Higher order thinking is emphasized across grades and content areas via questioning, which are embedded in learning activities across the curricula. School leaders and teachers have identified building student autonomy as their instructional focus. The goal is to ensure that students become independent learners, develop resiliency, improve their collaborative skills, and develop work habits needed to succeed in college and career. Students report working on multiple projects. Lesson plans are routinely attached to units of study, and have culminating tasks are interdisciplinary with real world applications. For example, a fifth grade social studies lesson plan has students interpret the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by chunking an article into sections and having student groups use a close reading anchor chart to analyze their respective pieces of the text, verbally sharing their ideas about the author's purpose along the way. A culminating task has students collaboratively write and perform scripts based on this theme. These units contain options for students such as tape recording their scripts or using sentence frames, lists of steps and anchor charts for their reference. Higher achievers are challenged to use alliteration in their writing and employ the use of 'dead' word list strategies to avoid the use of clichés. As a result, the school continues to close the achievement gap for all students and maintains high levels of student progress for all learners even in the face of more rigorous State testing. For example, the 2012-2013 Progress Report scores indicate increases in the percentages of students at the 75th growth percentile or above for almost all measured students' subgroups in math and English language arts.
- Teaching practices promote high levels of thinking, provide multiple entry points for all learners, and further aligns to the school wide belief in preparing all students for college and career. (1.2)
  - Strong beliefs about how students learn best are consistent across classrooms. Classroom learning environments at all grade levels are based on Vygotsky's Theory of Development that pushes students out of their comfort zone and challenges them to engage in tasks of higher difficulty. Teacher teams discuss ways that students can independently self-reflect and set goals in alignment with the school's focus on student engagement and autonomy utilizing the Danielson framework. Students feel that they can take control of their learning by using art, PowerPoint, essay writing and other ways to express their thinking. As a result, teaching practices and teacher discussions across the school support these beliefs in a coherent and complete manner.
  - Teachers routinely scaffold instruction to strategically ensure effective points of entry for all learners. Students are provided with tailored materials such as tiered vocabulary lists, and graphic organizers to work through their tasks, and are expected to articulate the reasoning for their

answers. For example, in one third grade math class students analyzed patterns in base-ten place value, were grouped homogeneously based on assessed prior knowledge, and engaged in activities designed to move them up to the next level along the continuum of their place value understanding. The teacher precut grids for students with motor-control limitations, and challenged high achievers to calculate the number of grids required to cover a classroom wall. As a result of these high-quality supports, extensions and scaffolds, the school's English language learners progress has increased 22% and movement for students with disabilities to less restrictive environments has quadrupled according to 2012-2013 Progress Report data.

- The principal makes key decisions around the budget, assignments, and partnerships aligned to the school's instructional goals to increase learning for all students. (1.3)
  - In spite of budget cuts and loss of Title 1 funding, the principal's strong belief in creating a community of strategic thinkers and lifelong learners underpins the school's organizational structures and creative use of resources. Consequently, the bulk of the school's funding is channeled toward high quality direct services to students resulting in lower student-teacher ratios for tier two and tier three students. Part-time coaches and school aides are retained to maintain the same level of services to students and teachers in a more economical fashion. Private money comes to the school via parental fundraising, corporate donors and numerous approved grants to bolster the school's budget. These monies are used to run the school's robotics program and to partner with numerous community based organizations to supplement the school's arts program with instrumental music, chorus, dance and theater. Partnerships with numerous colleges provide student-teachers in most classrooms to increase the individual support to students. The school's long range goals are to prepare their students to become leaders in Sustainable Technologies by building their understanding and knowledge to foster their creativity and potential genius in taking "Green" technologies to the next level. The school has recently purchased reconditioned laptop computers and I-Pads for student use to enhance their learning. For example, third grade students have created a green-screen movie, entitled "Tour of the World," that utilizes bar code technology to activate the country selected by the viewer. Activating the bar codes links viewers to a background moving image of the country selected with an inset image of the student author narrating the respective geographical area. As a result, students are genuinely excited about their work and can articulate the methods they use to achieve project performance tasks.
  - Teacher assignments and student groupings are strategic as seen in the Response to Intervention Groups (RTI) and Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes that were intentionally converted over time from self-contained special education classes to increase the rigor of learning. Students receive interventions or supplementary services in a rich learning environment, and benefit from the challenges to achieve at a high level. School leaders reassign teaching assignments based on observable teacher strengths, use backwards grouping to move effective upper grade teachers to the lower grades, and embed upper grade practices in lower grades to accelerate outcomes. Grade teams meet at least twice each

week to strengthen student work by examining assessment results at the end of each unit, refine performance tasks so that individual students and groups of students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, are challenged and engaged. These practices contribute to steadily increasing overall percentile rankings on New York City Progress Reports placing the school in the top 15% of citywide elementary school performance in the most recent report.

- The school cultivates a respectful culture for all constituents, where students are known and high levels of support foster students' personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - School stakeholders share the vision that a positive school wide culture celebrates learning, and safeguards that the social-emotional needs of every student are met to ensure college and career readiness. Input from the student government has resulted in raising money for Penny Harvest, establishing talent show performances and starting a chorus group. Students also develop constitutions in their respective classrooms to ensure that the rights of all are respected. As a result, parents, students and staff unanimously agree that the school fosters a healthy and safe climate as evidenced by the school's two year suspension report indicating a decrease in the number of suspensions from 7 in the 2011-2012 school year to 3 in the 2012-2013 school year with accompanying decreases in occurrence report rates during the same time period.
  - School clinicians work with staff to support the academic and personal growth of students to ensure college and career readiness. Boys and girls groups are conducted to provide child/youth development services to students. A recess coach from a community-based organization uses music, songs, and games to develop self-regulation skills during student free time. Partnerships with local hospitals provide psychology interns who work closely with students with special needs, and conduct functional behavioral assessments that are used to form behavior intervention plans for each student to positively impact their growth. As a result, students articulate the fact that they feel highly supported in both academic and personal endeavors. These supports contribute to steadily increasing attendance data as evidenced by a 97.82% attendance rate so far this year compared to a 96.64% attendance rate at this time last year.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teaching practice with a clear focus on improving instructional practices for increasing student learning. (4.1)
  - The principal and four teachers study how to use coaching techniques to build capacity for the entire staff to enable teachers to become "experts" in various components of the Danielson framework. This "Teacher Expertise List" is utilized by teachers, especially student teachers and new teachers, to observe good practice in their selected areas of need. The principal and her assistant principal have completed one complete cycle of informal observations to date. I-Pads are used by administrators to photo student work during classroom visits and copies of finished student work products are requested when pertinent. Ongoing one-on-one data meetings are conducted with the principal and coaches to ensure that students are making the level of progress necessary to reach

school goals. Teachers and school leaders examine assessment results by topic by using formative classroom data during these meetings to identify patterns of concepts and skills that need to be addressed as next instructional steps, thereby using differentiated feedback to elevate school-wide instructional practices.

- The school has developed a shared understanding of effective instruction by using the Danielson Framework for Effective Teaching over the last three years and has decided to aim for "bottom up" rigor as opposed to "top down" rigor in light of their focus on developing student autonomy. The principal or assistant principal use low inference observations to have a conversation with teachers regarding observation findings. Explicit next steps are then provided to ensure positive movement within the framework. For instance, an observation artifact for a new teacher suggests the use of other ongoing assessments besides "thumbs-up" and recommends more use of "turn and talk" strategies to increase the levels of student engagement. Recommendations also included viewing a particular video on ARIS Learn and set up a visit with a teacher expert in student engagement techniques. Teachers then self-reflect and use feedback to constantly adjust their professional goals. As a result, school-wide instructional practices have elevated over time as evidenced by tracking tools from last year that measure competency ratings for individual teachers over time. This practice will be continued this year utilizing data tools on Advance.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Extend data gathering and analysis practices to all core subjects to provide a complete picture of students' progress across all aspects of the school in order to accelerate improvements in student achievement. (2.2)
- The school uses Go Math pre- and end-of unit assessments, performance assessments, math and English language arts baseline assessments, English language learner periodic assessments, and CCLS aligned rubrics to support student mastery of college and career readiness work. To support student mastery of goals, all teachers utilize rubrics for self-assessment and use them to grade students' work and review conference notes and running records to note strengths and needs relative to learning targets set by CCLS. As a result, teachers are able to track and understand students' progress relative to the rubric, and are able to provide relevant written feedback to students to increase their academic achievement levels, as well as to evaluate and revise instruction. Teachers conduct ongoing checks for understanding and routinely circulate among groups of students using specifically-formulated questions to elicit evidence of student understanding and record their findings to adjust instruction. Grading policies are aligned with the school's curricula across grades and utilize a uniform 1-4 rating system to establish grading coherence. Current practices track the progress of students in detail for English language arts, math, and science content areas thereby offering a clear portrait of student mastery in these subjects. Although social studies projects are aligned to CCLS, the school is not tracking achievement in the content standards impeding efforts to create a clear picture of students' progress across grades.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Chelsea Prep	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>			
<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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
<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?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?				<b>X</b>			
<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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>