



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Margaret Douglas**

**Elementary School M036**

**123 Morningside Drive  
New York  
NY 10027**

**Principal: Heather Jn Baptist**

**Dates of review: January 29 – 30, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Margaret Douglas is an elementary school with 539 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 52% Black, 45% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 19% 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 91.1%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school prioritizes academic, social and emotional development and the administration meaningfully involves students in decision-making resulting in a positive and inclusive culture. (1.4)
  - The principal states that staff members celebrate the “whole child.” To further cultivate a nurturing culture, staff members are encouraged to find areas of strengths within each student and to publicly acknowledge growth while continuing to meet individual needs. Additionally, the Child Study Team (CST) meets biweekly to swiftly resolve impediments to learning. Parents are invited to attend these meetings which may result in the extension of services to the entire family. Students engage in varied discussions and activities around the *Book of the Month*, which reinforce positive characteristics in a respectful and inclusive environment. Students voiced that safety lock down drills, the requirements for hall passes and the presence of school safety agents all help to make them feel that the school is a safe place where they can turn to teachers, the principal, guidance counselor and other staff to help them resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with learning. Parents appreciate the range of academic and social-emotional supports provided. Various rituals and routines encourage student voice and students openly share their thoughts and feelings. The principal shared that student government members meet with the guidance counselor and parent coordinator who coordinate their activities. Last school year student government representatives expressed concerns regarding the lack of play equipment during recess. They then led a student drive where all students were encouraged to contribute \$1 each toward the purchase of new equipment. Additionally, during the student group meeting, students indicated that they participate in recycling activities, provide input on the theme for the fifth grade prom, recommended a sports challenge day for seniors and provide recommendations on varied spirit days such as pajama day and crazy hat day. Consequently, students feel that teachers and administrators respect their thoughts and ideas. As a result, their leadership skills are cultivated, which helps to bolster students’ self-esteem as evidenced by classroom visits and conversations with student groups.
  - The school is the recipient of a three year Community School’s grant that funds a full-time social worker who provides counseling services five days weekly in this first year of the grant. The after-school program ensures that students have access to homework assistance, sports, arts and other enrichment activities on a daily basis. Partnerships with Experience Corps, providing tutoring support to first and second grade students, The Reading Team, Harlem Dowling and BELL, offering academic and recreational support, coordinate well with school-based support structures to support the social-emotional and academic needs of students and their families. Students who are tutored are demonstrating better academic success in class with increased levels noted on running records. The guidance counselor and parent coordinator provide help to strategically link parents with specific agencies and services as needed. There are a number of assemblies focused on anti-bullying awareness. This successful initiative has raised students’ awareness levels. Additionally, attendance team members utilize a laser-like focus when reviewing attendance data. Noted trends result in interventions and rewards such as acknowledgement on a bulletin board on the

main floor. These targeted efforts result in current monthly class and grade attendance rates of 90% or higher, a decrease in the number of tardy students, as well as a reduction of reported incidents on the On-Line Occurrence Reporting System.

- The principal makes thoughtful organizational decisions around teacher assignments and the use of resources in alignment with school goals to support student achievement. (1.3)
  - The principal's budgeting, coupled with staff input result in the strategic use of resources that are aligned to the school's instructional goals which are focused on improving pedagogical practices and student outcomes. Through collaboration with Teachers College (TC), the school is the recipient of a grant which provides free medical and academic support to students and their families. To further support teachers' pedagogic growth, the school applied for a School-Based Option (SBO) which enables teachers to participate in four additional professional development half days during the school year. Additionally, a partnership with Carmel Hill Foundation provided new books to the refurbished school library, with plans to hire staff to ensure students have frequent library access. The relatively new principal is concerned with students' limited access to, and use of technology resources. As a result, she has recently purchased sixteen lap tops to broaden technology integration. This helps to support students' research skills. These efforts, aligned to the school's goals, are helping to solidify students' learning as evidenced in work products displayed in classrooms.
  - Prospective new teachers must interact with the principal and assistant principal who focus on the applicants' pedagogical practices aligned to the Common Core standards, as well as their knowledge of the utilization of data. Recent hires participated in interviews and were asked to model lessons as well as share professional artifacts prior to being selected. Academic intervention teachers develop and reinforce specific literacy skills for the lowest third of students, while the English as a second language (ESL) and special education certified teachers provide pull-out or push-in services to identified students with a goal focused on closing the achievement gap. This results in targeted assistance during the day and afterschool. Consequently, tracking logs reflect the growth of these identified students on the most recent formative assessment results. Additionally, the principal ensures that ESL and special education teachers share strategies during team meetings on how best to meet the individual needs of students. These practices not only result in a smaller student-to-teacher ratio, but they also increase the shared level of accountability to accelerate student growth and are conducive to optimal levels of personal and academic success for all students.
- The principal supports teacher development through frequent observation and feedback cycles aligned to professional development with a focus on improving instructional practices throughout the school. (4.1)
  - A review of the observation calendar and written feedback provide evidence that the principal shares frequent, specific, and timely feedback with staff across Danielson domains and components. An *Advance* talent coach visits the school and supports the principal and assistant principal regarding the accuracy and meaningfulness of feedback. New teachers receive mentoring support from experienced peers. At the beginning of the school year the principal surveyed

the staff. As such, during individual conversations with teachers, the principal infuses formative and summative assessment results, including student work products, and uses this information to tailor professional development sessions to identified teachers' needs in order to support their identified areas of growth. Teachers attend *lunch and learn* sessions, observe videos, participate in monthly specialty group conferences at TC and have engaged in focused inter-visitations. As a result, several teachers continue to refine their pedagogical practices and exhibit an understanding of grade level strategies that elicit basic student understanding.

## What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the alignment between teacher practice and the school's belief about learning to ensure high levels of engagement and thinking so that all students reach their potential. (1.2)
  - The principal shares her belief that students' needs are best met during small group instruction where students are given opportunities to build on their learning. Some teachers prepare lessons that target the specific needs and strengths of students and employ strategies that address a range of student ability levels. To meet students' needs, teachers use scaffolding tools such as graphic organizers and manipulatives to support writing and math. In a fourth grade class, the teacher modeled for students how she supported her claim with specific evidence while asking open-ended questions to check for understanding. Students shared their opinions and cited multiple sources to support their responses. However, this is not consistent across grades. In some classrooms, teachers are not yet adept at using exemplars and, student work products do not reflect immersion in a unit of study where students employ research strategies across multiple sources. Additionally, tasks are not consistently challenging for students. As such, some teachers do not yet plan lessons that demonstrate sufficient engagement in higher order thinking so that all work products demonstrate activities that stretch the thinking of all learners, especially those performing at the highest achievement levels.
  - Teachers are beginning to employ open-ended questions to spark discussions and students in some classrooms are questioning each other's assumptions and ideas. For example, during a math lesson, the teacher consistently used content vocabulary and continually asked probing questions to solicit feedback and check for understanding. One student clearly explained her answer while providing evidence to support her reasoning and explain why the solution provided by her classmate was incorrect. However, these strategies and deep levels of student participation are not consistent across all grades; in some classrooms questions and answers are most often between teacher and individual student. Consequently, thought-provoking questions and conversations that give students the chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds and use questions as a way to learn more, are not yet the norm across grades or content.
- Improve the work around curriculum analysis to develop consistent alignment of key standards and tasks that will increase rigor and higher order skills to cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
  - Over the summer, school leaders and staff attended professional development focused on the integration of the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) and

the Common Core standards in English language arts (ELA) and math units of study. However, these practices are not yet evident across all grades and subjects. For example, refinement of the social studies and science content does not presently demonstrate rigorous expectations and alignment to State standards across grades. Essential questions are not evident across content and teachers do not plan lessons that reflect immersion in social studies and science units of study. As a result, most students are not routinely exposed to both content areas and the school is missing out on incorporating curricula that addresses the achievement gap between the lowest and highest achieving students.

- Curricula and academic tasks emphasize higher order thinking skills in some grades and content areas. However, teacher teams do not consistently utilize student work products to plan and refine their developed tasks. As a result, some academic tasks are not well aligned to standards and, as such, do not cognitively engage students performing at varied ability levels, especially higher achieving students. For example, performance-based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning do not extend across all content areas and grade levels and, while English language learners and special education students are suitably challenged, other students are not as equally challenged. As such, these students do not consistently make personal connections to themselves and the world and do not transfer their learning to new contexts.
- Promote greater reliability in the alignment of assessment practices and rubrics to standards and tasks so that teachers can gauge student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of curricular and instructional learning. (2.2)
  - Some teachers use rubrics to provide written feedback to students, but this is not a consistent practice across the school. Data tracking charts are displayed in data binders and teachers use data from common grade- level assessments including end of unit tests, performance tasks, Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) and Fountas and Pinnel running records to set targets and track student growth. During planning meetings, teachers do not yet utilize protocols to analyze student work products. Thus far, their approach is limited to identifying the needs of individual students and some teachers are not utilizing the data to make immediate instructional adaptations. While some teachers track results, others do not yet systematically review the data on their tracking charts. As a result, all teachers are not consistently using the data to make needed changes to the curriculum, student groupings, and their instructional practices across grades and subjects.
  - In one third grade classroom the teacher encourages metacognitive strategies and uses a checklist on a regular basis to assess student understanding of specific concepts. She then uses this information to inform the following day's lesson, regroup students and thoughtfully reteaches in order to address students' misunderstandings. The teacher utilized varied strategies and encourages students to use math manipulatives and partner conversations to help reinforce conceptual understanding. This level of checking for student understanding, however, is not the norm across grades and classrooms. Additionally, although teachers repeatedly ask questions, many do not analyze student responses as a check for understanding. This hinders teachers' ability to make timely and effective adjustments so that students receive daily feedback and are able to master concepts and further their own learning.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Margaret Douglas	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		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>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>