



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

Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support  
2013-2014

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**P.S. 048 P.O. Michael J. Buczek**

**Elementary School 06M048**

**4360-78 Broadway  
Manhattan, NY 10033**

**Principal: Tracy Walsh**

**Dates of review: December 10 - 11, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Elsa Nunez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 048 P.O. Michael J. Buczek is an elementary school with 638 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 93% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Across classrooms, the standards-based curriculum engages students in rigorous and challenging learning experiences to increase student achievement (1.1)
  - The school has adopted the ReadyGen curriculum for English language arts and GoMath in order to provide students with instruction that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Analysis of the new curricula indicates that they are well aligned to the Department of Education’s instructional shifts because it requires students to read a balance of literary and non-fiction texts, read grade level texts, demonstrate problem solving strategies and fluency in math. Across classrooms, teachers require students to explain answers with evidence from texts read and explain mathematical strategies applied to solve math problems, thus adhering to the instructional expectations promoted by the school. The principal also indicated that allowing students to struggle productively with difficult content and engage in discussions about multiple pathways to problem solving is central to the school’s beliefs about how students learn best in order to be prepared for college and careers. Consequently, teachers promote accountable talk school-wide by enabling students to support each other by asking peers to clarify, extend and justify their thinking. The school has established cycles of three to five weeks that require teacher teams to Create, Assess and Revise (CAR) curricular units in English language arts and math in order to make timely adjustments based on student performance data. As a result, coherent practices such as data boards, identifying essential questions, key vocabulary, big ideas, primary and supporting texts for English language arts units are implemented across classrooms so that teachers have a clear understanding as to how to implement the school’s CCLS-aligned curricula.
  - As part of the CAR cycles, teacher teams use the principles of Understanding by Design to develop essential questions and tasks for each unit. Teacher teams analyze student work to further refine instructional focus of units and resulting tasks. The school also uses the Depth of Knowledge matrix to analyze the type of questions asked by teachers in an effort to increase the level of complexity of questions. As a result, across classrooms teachers ask open-ended questions to promote students’ abilities to think critically about essential issues. Teachers give students multiple opportunities to discuss responses through well-planned “turn and talk” activities using accountable talk strategies. Teacher teams have developed lesson plan formats that include strategies such as graphic organizers, sentence starters and pre-teaching of vocabulary to support struggling students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. The school’s efforts to develop students’ abilities to critically analyze complex tasks have improved the quality of student discussion and writing for all students across grades and subject areas, as evidenced by classroom observations and student work.
- The school’s inclusive culture and nurturing environment supports the academic and social development of students and adults. (1.4)
  - All administrators station themselves at school entrances to greet students during morning arrival to promote a welcoming environment. The principal has established norms for interactions between adults and students by outlining expectations during faculty conferences and beginning of year memorandums. Teachers have created displays to celebrate the diversity of the students represented in their classrooms by featuring countries of origin, student likes, special skills and accomplishments to

promote a sense of community across classrooms. The school's pupil personnel committee closely monitors the achievement of subgroups of students such as new arrivals, holdovers and at risk students in order monitor services provided to students. The school's guidance counselor also collaborates with the in house mental health clinic sponsored by Columbia Presbyterian Hospital to support the social and emotional needs of students through individual and group counseling. The clinic's resident social worker, who is considered as a member of the school staff, provides staff with professional development on how to deal with at risk students in order to avoid referring students for more restrictive interventions. School leaders solicit student feedback regarding school-wide initiatives from students who participate in the school's program Building Options and Opportunities for Students, student council and student clubs to assure that students have input regarding programs offered at the school. This inclusion of student voice has led to the development of a business club that runs a school store. As a result of the school's efforts, the school's rating in the category of safety on the School Survey which is above the city average and interviews with parents and students reveal that the school community believes that the school is a safe, nurturing place where students can thrive both socially and academically.

- School leaders have established effective structures to provide teachers with feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework in order to improve teacher practice. (4.1)
  - School administrators jointly conducted all initial planning conferences with teachers to discuss professional goals for the year and to develop plans to further student achievement, enabling the administrative team to support the development of all teachers. Based on observation options chosen by teachers, a schedule of formal and informal observations was developed to facilitate the completion of observations by administrators. Administrators have also jointly conducted teacher observations to norm responses using the Danielson Framework. Videotaped lessons afforded the school the opportunity to engage teachers in discussions regarding specific components of the Danielson Framework and analyze instruction using a common lens, allowing teachers to gain a deeper understanding of this framework. Review of observations reports indicate that teachers have received clear, specific feedback and aligned to school-wide initiatives and key components of the Danielson Framework. For example, feedback to support the further development student discussion and scaffolding instruction for English language learners is evident on observation reports. The principal and assistant principals analyze feedback provided to teachers in order to surface trends and determine next steps. Analysis of this feedback surfaced that there has been a decrease in the number of teachers who are rated effective on component 3D, Assessment in Instruction, and an increase in the number of teachers who are rated effective in component 3B, Questioning and Discussion. As a result, the school has planned professional development sessions to improve teacher assessment practices in order to target student needs. Teacher testimonials and classroom observations also demonstrate that, as a result of the improvement of teachers' effectiveness in questioning and discussion techniques, students are able to engage in self-directed, meaningful discussion around a specific topic.
- Teacher teams engage in structured, collaborative review of curricular units and student work to prepare students for grade level expectations. (4.2)
  - Teacher teams are scheduled to meet weekly during the school day as well as after-school to review student work to assess progress towards school-wide goals in order to improve student achievement. All grade level teacher teams work on developing effective strategies in literacy and math as part of the three to five week CAR cycle. Guided by instructional coaches or teacher leaders, teacher teams

follow established protocols of CAR cycles, of which analysis of student achievement data is central to plan for whole class as well as small group instruction. Teachers are required to bring work in the high, medium and low range to enable close analysis of student behaviors at all ranges, leading to the development of strategies to support students. The goal of this analysis of student work is to identify what students are able to do in relation to learning targets and plan next steps and modify future units. Teacher teams analyze the implementation of school-wide initiatives, such as the level of complexity of questions asked, accountable talk strategies and improvement in the quality of student writing to gauge progress toward school goals. Based on analysis of student achievement, teacher teams have made refinements to the school's CCLS-aligned curricula, such as shortening the length of units and increasing focus of key elements within a unit that are aligned to school goals in order to support student mastery. As a result, observations demonstrate that across classrooms, teachers implement school-wide instructional initiatives such as explicitly teaching strategies, accountable talk and grouping of students for small group instruction in order to accelerate student learning.

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

- Develop greater consistency in the implementation of instructional strategies that support students at various levels to maximize learning opportunities for all students. (1.2)
  - The school believes that students learn best through discussion, engaging activities and providing real world experiences in order to contextualize learning. The school has used the Danielson Framework, with a special focus on the component related to questioning and discussion techniques, to improve teacher practice. Teachers promote student discussion by teaching accountable talk stems that require students to respond using prompts to agree, disagree, and ask for additional information and clarify statements in order to promote deep understanding of topics discussed. Teacher teams have a strong focus on increasing student engagement and are beginning to develop coherent instructional practices across grades through planned small group activities and “turn and talk” prompts that promote student discussion. Evident across classrooms are vocabulary charts corresponding to key terms learned during units of study to support the development of content area vocabulary. Teachers are required to plan strategies such as pairing of English language learners with English proficient students for discussion, modeling of key terms, using SmartBoards and document cameras to provide students with visual and auditory support. During lesson planning, teachers develop essential questions at different levels of complexity so that all students are challenging during classroom instruction. However, all the practices promoted by the school to support subgroups of students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are not consistently evident across classrooms, thereby limiting opportunities for all students to fully access the school's standards based curriculum.
- Strengthen the use of formative and summative assessment by teachers in order to adjust curricular and instructional decisions. (2.2)
  - School-wide assessments such as writing trackers, math trackers, assessment of individual student reading levels using Developmental Reading Assessments in English and Spanish and end of unit exams allow staff to assess student progress and to group students for targeted instruction. Student progress is tracked by comparing results of beginning of year baseline assessments with results of interim assessments. Teachers use common grade level rubrics to assess student work, gauge progress, revise curricular units and develop instructional strategies to

support student mastery of key concepts. Student work reviewed demonstrates that most feedback provided to students is aligned to grade level rubrics, detailing student accomplishments and next steps. However, review of teacher feedback and interviews with students demonstrate that the language used to provide feedback to students is not always actionable and written in a manner that is comprehensible to students in order to provide a clear roadmap for improvement. As a result, students' ability to use feedback to improve performance is hindered.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: P.S. 048 P.O. Michael J. Buczek	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			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>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed