



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Luis Munoz Rivera Elementary School

M083

**219 East 109 Street
Manhattan
NY 10029**

Principal: Frances Castillo

Dates of review: February 25 - 26, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Alexandra Estrella

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Luis Munoz Rivera School is an elementary school with 425 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 25% Black, 62% Hispanic, 2% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty strategically adopt curricula to ensure that they provide instruction aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate the shifts, leading to all students engaging in high level tasks. (1.1)
 - Based on last year's data, the school leaders and staff decided to implement the curriculum recommended by the Department of Education to ensure that the tasks and units of study aligned with the rigorous expectations associated with the CCLS, leading them to adopt ReadyGEN for grades 2-5 and GoMath! in kindergarten through grade 5. In kindergarten and first grade, the staff uses a literacy curriculum that was created by the teachers in alignment with the CCLS and in April 2014 the school plans to have the first graders follow the ReadyGEN curriculum for the first time in preparation for second grade. As the teachers implemented the ReadyGEN curriculum materials they found that the writing component was not sufficiently preparing students. Consequently, they are in the process of modifying the curriculum to infuse additional opportunities to embed more writing tasks. For example, the literacy units for grades 2 and 4 have embedded lessons that teach the writing process and teachers have infused prompts that students make use of to respond to text or write informative essays about a topic associated with the reading. To add, the school has integrated science and social studies lessons as part of the ReadyGEN curriculum, since some of the units deal with informational texts aligned to the science and social studies standards associated with the different grade levels. As a result, students engage in interdisciplinary units of study and build their capacity as readers and writers. The principal stated that from the beginning of the school year students are told that they are being prepared to go to college. Last year the principal invited a former graduate to be the keynote speaker at graduation because the individual had graduated from college and exhibited the habits and determination required to be successful in college; hence, the student was able to highlight for the graduates the path they need to take in order to reach academic success. Furthermore, the principal has a book of the month and it is usually tied with a college theme. The principal stated that in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners, teachers filter the vocabulary, use picture queues, and create centers based on the areas students need to further develop. During classroom visits some classes met the diverse learning needs of students through differentiated centers. The Response to Intervention (RTI) program is also utilized to support students struggling and English language learners by providing intervention during the extended day program. As a result of these additional supports as well as curricular alignment to CCLS and instructional shifts across most grades and subjects, most students have access to the curricula and tasks that prepares them for college and career.
- School leaders makes strategic organizational decisions to ensure that teacher teams effectively collaborate as they look at student work and continuously refine curricula and instruction, resulting in high quality tasks and student work products. (1.3)
 - In order to provide additional interventions and supports for teachers, the administrative team has a reading recovery teacher serving students in

kindergarten through first grade and a second reading recovery teacher that services grades 2 through 5. Anticipating the demands of the new CCLS-aligned materials, the school leadership provided professional development around its implementation as well as support to teachers in modifying the new curriculum to meet the diverse learning needs of the student body. As a result, this year the principal designed an intervisitation calendar for teachers to observe and support one another. She also has grade team leaders that support teachers within a grade adapt the new CCLS-aligned curricula and instructional shifts as well as look at student work. To ensure that teachers continuously modify curricula to meet the diverse needs of students and assess student progress, the leadership team has developed an RTI team that reviews and regroups students based on their specific areas of growth. Additionally, to increase student academic achievement, the school has partnered with City Year to provide tutors to help students with their homework. In addition to this partnership and the added instructional supports, the school curriculum is in the process of being completely aligned to the CCLS and modified to meet students' diverse needs as evidenced by the kindergarten through grade 5 writing tasks modifications and increased student achievement as captured in the school's grade level data charts. Staff time is strategically structured such that grade level teams meet at least once a week to look at student work and modify units of study and lessons, as observed during the second grade team meeting. Also, the RTI team meets bi-weekly to look at individual student needs based on teacher referrals. Teachers submit areas students need to further develop and the team organizes intervention groups during the extended day program. As a result, students demonstrate growth in their areas of concern as evidenced by teachers' conferencing notes, running records and unit assessments.

- School leaders make use of the observation process to provide feedback to teachers, resulting in professional growth and increased instructional capacity. (4.1)
 - School leaders, in collaboration with teacher team leaders and coaches, use the Danielson Framework for Teaching, along with the analysis of learning outcomes and an Advance spreadsheet, to track the school's cycles of observation and identify areas that individual and groups of teachers need for targeted professional development. In the beginning of the year, teachers were asked to set goals prior to their planning conference with the administrative team. Also, the principal has developed strong professional relationships with staff so that they feel that they can openly speak about the areas they need to develop further. During the teachers' initial meetings, the principal makes sure their chosen professional development goals align with the needs identified by the school leaders as well as the needs of the students they are serving. The meeting is also used to set short-term goals, develop action plans and keep teachers' morale high while they work toward their long-term goals. As evident in several samples of teacher observations, the leadership team provides actionable feedback to teachers that is carefully monitored and refined through subsequent informal or formal observations. Most of the teacher observation reports reviewed showed how the feedback provided to individual teachers was aligned to their year-long goals and clearly provided scaffolded next steps to improve their pedagogy. For example, a grade 2 teacher set goals around question and discussion, and the ongoing classroom feedback supported her development in that area. Furthermore, in addition to the Advance report, the principal provides teachers with a detailed description of areas they need to continue to

develop. Consequently, teachers, regardless of their level of experience, are on track to reach their goals by the end of the academic school year; thereby, increasing student achievement as evident by student work products.

- Teachers analyze student work and engage in professional collaborations that inform school-wide policy decisions relating to curriculum development and CCLS integration, resulting in improved student learning. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams, led by a grade team leader, engage in collaborative inquiry by looking at student work samples and determining next steps to support students in meeting their goals. The school's teams are organized by grade, vertically, and by RTI groups. The grade level teams meet at least once a week to look at student work samples and data trends to revise and adjust the curriculum. They also use protocols like the "Analysis Protocol" to look at student work and determine what next steps teachers should take to support struggling students. This was evidenced in agendas and the revised writing tasks and support, as seen during the grade and RTI team meetings. Also, most teachers had a system to track and monitor student work. For example, during the grade 2 team meeting, teachers analyzed student work and found that the majority of students were not using correct punctuation, vocabulary in context, and were missing textual evidence in their writing. Thus, the teachers chose to revise units of study to include more writing and engage students in classroom discussion to address these weaknesses. In RTI team meetings, teachers reviewed the documents submitted for Tier 2 supports, which led to them revising the groups students were placed in based on growth they had shown. It also led to the teachers identifying new students that needed additional scaffolded supports. Before the RTI team reviews potential students for intervention, teachers have to conduct a series of clinics to support the students in their areas of need. Once areas of concern are identified, they are then addressed during the RTI sessions. Coaches as well as teachers within the team are given leadership opportunities to make and adjust curriculum and to decide on key instructional adjustments that affect student learning across the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher assessment practices to include meaningful feedback and reflect varied use of ongoing checks for understanding during lesson delivery so that all students can be supported toward increased mastery. (2.2)
 - School leaders and teachers employ curriculum-aligned assessments to support curricular and instructional adjustments in order to increase student mastery. The school has a year-long assessment calendar that outlines unit-by-unit the assessments that will take place within each grade. These assessments are used to determine what students already know and still need to learn. With the data collected from pre- and post-unit assessments, teachers are able to modify the curricula to serve the needs of all students including special education students and English language learners. For example, during the grade 2 team meeting, the teachers were looking at the culminating performance-based literacy assessments and found that students struggled with organization, punctuation, incorporating facts, defining unfamiliar words and using correct verb tenses. As a result, teachers decided to modify the unit to address these areas of concern and to include an additional writing performance task to monitor student growth in writing.

However, the school did not employ vertically and horizontally aligned rubrics that could determine student growth through time. Some teachers track disaggregated data from common assessments on skill target sheets, while others use narratives, thereby inhibiting individual teachers and vertical teams from diagnosing trends as well as common areas of improvement. These measures of student learning and classroom assessment data drive unit modification and lesson development to meet goals for the school, classrooms, English language learners, special education students and individual students. Teachers across grades and content areas provide students with next steps for how they can improve their performance. For example, in one grade 4 class, students were assigned to draft a piece of narrative writing. A sample first draft showed that the teacher provided students with feedback to improve their writing. For example, "You included details to describe events in your narrative, next time make sure to include additional details to support your claim." However, in many cases, the writing process was not evident and feedback did not progressively improve samples of student work. In a grade 4 social studies class, students were studying the physical features of landforms in the United States of America. The teacher analyzed student work samples and conference notes to establish three different tier groups. The teacher worked with a small group of students that need to be re-taught the details associated with the different landforms. While she worked with this small group of students, the tier two group worked on writing a poem about one of the landforms and the tier three group used a map of the United States to plan a trip across the country. After the tier one student worked one-on-one with the teacher and obtained feedback, the students were able to apply their knowledge and move to one of the more challenging tasks. As a result of the feedback provided to students in the lower tier, they were able to clarify misunderstandings or improve in their individual areas of growth; thereby, showing improvement in their ability to achieve learning objectives. However, this type of effective practice was not evident in most classrooms, thereby limiting opportunities for all students to achieve mastery.

- Enhance teachers' instructional practices to provide learners with multiple opportunities to access the curricula so that all students can demonstrate high levels of thinking and produce meaningful work. (1.2)
 - The belief that students learn best when they work both individually and in groups and engage in hands-on opportunities is commonly practiced throughout the school. The majority of the classes apply the workshop model for most lessons, focusing the students on the learning objective so that students have a substantial amount of time to practice what they have learned. Teachers are aware of and apply the expectations of the school's framework for teacher practice and the Depth of Knowledge matrix to provide multiple entry points to engage all learners. In a grade 2 math class the students were engaged in three different tiered activities about 2-digit subtraction: the tier one group focused on questions and work in a small group with the teacher; the tier two group worked on subtraction with and without regrouping; and the tier three group worked on additional regrouping problems independently. These tasks provided students multiple entry points to the content. There were a small number of classrooms observed where lessons mainly focused on low-level questions even though students were prepared to engage in more rigorous questions; hence, there were some missed opportunities for students to explain their process. In other classrooms, students were conducting investigations to build their

understanding of the content, but not all students were supported in developing their wonderings or responses. Teachers strategically grouped the students and provided small group lessons to support English language learners, special education students and struggling students and in some cases problems were broken down to help students understand the process for problem solving or dissecting a complex text. Teachers noted that some students need additional support and practice to reach mastery. Thus, the school has developed and planned next steps and scaffolds to support learning to consistently offer all students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning and exhibit their thinking through deep discussions and high quality work products. However, teachers' beliefs about best practices school-wide have not yet been the focus of team and school meetings, limiting the extent to which all staff can help to tailor teaching practices to the unique needs of this school community.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name:	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